United Nations S/PV.6470

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6470th meeting

Wednesday, 19 January 2011, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Barbalić	(Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Members:	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I should like to invite the representatives of Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Chile, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: Due to an ongoing labour dispute of Israeli Foreign Service employees, the Israeli Permanent Mission to the United Nations will unfortunately not be able to participate in today's Security Council meeting.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 17 January 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2011/23 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council that will be held on Wednesday, 19 January 2011, on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diallo, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe.

Mr. Pascoe: As a new year begins — one in which we hope there will be some progress in Middle East peacemaking — several immediate challenges are present. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations remain at a deadlock. Developments in both the occupied Palestinian territory and in Lebanon have heightened tensions in the reporting period.

On the Israeli-Palestinian track, we appreciate and support United States efforts to engage in parallel talks on substance with the parties. United States Envoy Mitchell visited the region in late December, and Israeli and Palestinian negotiators held separate consultations with the United States in Washington, D.C., earlier this month. I would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's call on the parties to seriously engage on final status issues, and welcome United States intentions to be a proactive participant offering ideas and proposals when appropriate. We also appreciate the diplomatic efforts of a number of other world leaders who have recently visited the region.

However, the target dates supported by the Quartet for reaching an Israeli-Palestinian framework agreement on permanent status and for completion of the Palestinian Authority's two-year State-building programme will be upon us in eight to nine months from now. In this regard, the viability of the political process and the credibility of the Quartet are also at stake this year. We are seriously concerned at the continuing lack of progress in the search for a negotiated settlement. Peace and Palestinian statehood cannot be further delayed.

Quartet members will meet in Munich on 5 February. The Secretary-General also recently underlined to League of Arab States Secretary-General Amre Moussa his commitment to ensuring close coordination, and efforts are continuing to convene a

meeting between the Quartet and the Arab League Follow-Up Committee. We take note of the Arab League position lending support to the position of President Abbas on settlements and its call for the provision of parameters by the United States and the Quartet to facilitate a negotiated endgame based on the 1967 lines.

During the reporting period, a further number of Latin American countries extended recognition to a State of Palestine based on the 1967 lines. During his visit to the occupied Palestinian territory yesterday, President Medvedev reiterated the Russian Federation's long-standing support to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to an independent State with its capital in East Jerusalem.

Further settlement expansion in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continues to undermine trust and prejudices final status discussions. The sharp increase in Israeli settlement construction activity recorded at the end of the settlement moratorium on 26 September 2010 has continued, with construction work beginning on up to 2,000 units in the West Bank since that time.

On 9 January, the Secretary-General issued a statement deploring the demolition of Shepherd's Hotel in the heart of a Palestinian neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. The Secretary-General expressed deep regret regarding Israel's failure to heed growing international concern over the expansion of illegal settlements. We are also worried about plans being developed to expand the Gilo settlement in East Jerusalem, near Bethlehem. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on Israel to freeze all settlement activity in conformity with international law and the Road Map.

Despite mounting challenges on the ground, the Palestinian Authority continues to make strides in its State-building agenda. We alert donors to an estimated $100-million shortfall in external financing of recurrent expenditures of the Palestinian Authority from last year. The Palestinian Authority continues to seek to reduce its reliance on this financing, but it is nevertheless vital that donors continue to provide predictable, adequate and timely support.

The Palestinian Authority has continued its efforts to promote security in Area A. We also note positively a recent decision to cease bringing civilians before Palestinian Authority military tribunals. We believe that Israel can and must do more to enable Palestinian efforts to improve both security and economic conditions by easing restrictions on movement and access and facilitating Palestinian Authority efforts in Area C.

We note that Israeli security forces conducted 486 search operations in the West Bank. While we are cognizant of the security concerns that Israel cites in the context of these actions, we believe that they seriously undermine the Palestinian Authority when the strategic goal should be the opposite. Eighty-seven Palestinians were injured and 251 arrested in Israel Defense Forces (IDF) actions. However, most worrying were the deaths of four Palestinians in separate incidents, which warrant more transparent investigations and measures of accountability from Israel. The authorities must take greater precautions to ensure the protection of the civilian population under occupation and refrain from excessive use of force.

The most serious incidents include the killing of an unarmed man at a checkpoint on 2 January and of a 65 year-old man in his bed during an incursion in Hebron on 7 January, aimed at arresting alleged Hamas militants released by Palestinian security forces the day before for lack of evidence. In addition, a Palestinian woman died on 31 December after inhaling tear gas used by the IDF to disperse demonstrators protesting the barrier. A Palestinian man was also shot and killed at a checkpoint on 8 January; Israeli soldiers reported the discovery of two pipe bombs and a knife on his body. Some 43 others were arrested while protesting the barrier during the reporting period, and an anti-barrier Israeli activist was sentenced to 16 months in jail. In addition, 13 Palestinians were injured by Israeli settlers. Four settlers and seven members of the Israeli forces were injured by Palestinians during the reporting period.

On 12 January, a Palestinian involved in organizing protests against Israeli settlements in Silwan was expelled for four months to the West Bank. The fate of three Hamas-affiliated Palestinian legislators from East Jerusalem who have taken refuge in a compound of the International Committee of the Red Cross since July remains unresolved, while a legislator earlier transferred to Ramallah has not been allowed to return. We continue to be concerned about the human rights situation of Palestinian East Jerusalemites and to oppose any measures of forcible transfer. On 4 January, the Israeli authorities

announced the arrest of two Palestinian East Jerusalemites in connection with an alleged plot to fire a missile into the Jerusalem football stadium.

During the reporting period, 30 Palestinian structures were demolished in East Jerusalem and 41 in Area C of the West Bank, displacing 148 Palestinians. This is worrying and gives rise to serious humanitarian concerns, while contributing to heightened tensions. I am also concerned by the difficulties faced by impoverished Palestinian communities in Area C that have no adequate access to basic services because of problems in obtaining permission from the IDF to develop infrastructure in their areas. The Humanitarian Coordinator has supported a humanitarian response plan to meet a first set of urgent needs in education, water and shelter in Area C, which has received limited facilitation by the Israeli authorities thus far.

We remain concerned about the situation in Gaza, including a recent increase in tensions. Palestinian militants fired 31 rockets and 47 mortar shells into Israel — which represents approximately a four-fold increase from the previous reporting period — while Israel conducted 11 incursions and 26 air strikes in Gaza. On 21 December, an Israeli child was wounded after a rocket landed near a kindergarten, while two foreign workers in Israel were wounded by a mortar on 8 January. Four Palestinian civilians, including persons apparently accessing lands in the Israeli-declared buffer zone for civilian purposes, were killed by Israeli fire. Eleven Palestinian militants were also killed. Nineteen Palestinian civilians and 15 Palestinian militants were injured. An Israeli soldier was killed and four others were wounded by friendly fire during a clash with Palestinians on 7 January.

We condemn the indiscriminate firing of projectiles towards Israeli civilian areas by Palestinian militants. We equally stress that all parties must refrain from actions contrary to international humanitarian law that target or endanger civilians. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process was active during the reporting period to promote a restoration of calm. Egyptian authorities have urged Hamas to put an end to violence. The de facto Hamas authorities in Gaza recently stated publicly their commitment to maintaining calm, and claimed that there is inter-factional agreement on this. All responsible parties should cease acts of violence. A new outbreak of major hostilities would be devastating, and must be avoided.

We can report no progress in efforts to further Palestinian reconciliation. We continue to monitor internal tensions.

A fundamental goal of the United Nations continues to be the revitalization of Gaza's economy and the search for an end to the Israeli closure policy within the framework of resolution 1860 (2009). Import and export levels have improved from the period before Israel's 2010 policy adjustment, but are still significantly below pre-2007 levels. On United Nations projects, on 6 January, Israel approved an additional $26.4 million in projects of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), including seven additional UNRWA schools. That brings the total portfolio of approved United Nations projects to $136.4 million.

Looking ahead, the scaling-up of the scope of goods allowed for export and the scale at which they are permitted to exit the Strip remains a key priority. The United Nations will also continue to put forward new programmes of work to the Government of Israel that complement those already presented, including programming to revitalize the private sector and rehabilitate public health infrastructure. These are already under active discussion with Israeli authorities. We appreciate the strong support of the Palestinian Authority for these efforts. We continue to engage Israeli authorities on the need to ensure sufficient crossings capacity.

Allow me to reiterate our continuing concern at the detention by Hamas of Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, and to once again appeal for his release and for humanitarian access to be granted without further delay. We continue to follow the situation of Palestinian prisoners, including women and children and persons held without trial, and underline the importance of progress in prisoner releases by Israel.

We regret the lack of progress in the effort to promote peace between Israel and Syria, despite continuing contacts by diplomatic actors, including reportedly French and United States envoys. While the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan has remained stable in spite of continued settlement activity, the resolution of the conflict between these two countries on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions is critical for regional stability, and an essential part of realizing the vision of the Arab Peace Initiative.

Please allow me now turn to developments in Lebanon, where the political crisis provoked by divergent views over the Special Tribunal for Lebanon has continued to deepen. On 12 January, the resignation of 10 cabinet ministers from the opposition, along with one minister from President Sleiman's bloc, forced the collapse of the Government of national unity. The Secretary-General called for continuing dialogue among the parties and respect for the Constitution and the laws of Lebanon, while emphasizing the importance of preserving calm. The Secretary-General also reiterated his full support for the independent work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

On 13 January, President Sleiman issued a statement accepting the resignation of the ministers but requesting that the Government continue functioning in a caretaker capacity. The President announced that he would conduct parliamentary consultations to designate a new Prime Minister. The consultations, originally scheduled for 17 January, were postponed until 24 January. Let me comment here that it is essential for all Lebanese leaders to continue to address the current political situation through dialogue, within the parameters established by the Constitution of Lebanon.

A trilateral meeting was held in Damascus on 17 January to discuss the situation in Lebanon, which was attended by Syrian President Al-Assad, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani of Qatar. On the following day, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar, together with the Foreign Minister of Turkey, held a series of meetings with all concerned parties in Beirut.

On 17 January, the Prosecutor of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon announced that he had submitted an indictment and supporting materials to the pre-trial judge for his review on that day. The content of the indictments would remain confidential at this stage. In that regard, the Secretary-General noted that the filing of an indictment by the Prosecutor was in pursuit of the Special Tribunal's mandate to end impunity for the terrible crimes that took the life of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 22 others, and related attacks. The Secretary-General reiterated his call on all parties to refrain from attempts to interfere in, or to influence, the work of the Special Tribunal, underlining that the independent judicial process should not be linked with any political debate and that it was important not to prejudge its outcome.

In the early hours of 18 January, organized groups of unarmed men — reportedly from Hizbullah — deployed in various parts of Beirut for several hours. They withdrew before 8 a.m., without causing further disruption to normal life and business in the city. The Lebanese Army eventually deployed personnel in several locations of Beirut, citing the need to reassure citizens.

The overall situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon was generally calm and stable. Almost daily intrusions into Lebanese airspace by aircraft of the Israel Defense Forces, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006), have continued in high numbers.

Preserving the stability of Lebanon and ensuring an end to impunity there is essential, if only because the Lebanese themselves have a right to both. But it is also critical to the broader fate of a region that needs, more than anything else, all elements to be conducive for progress towards comprehensive peace.

Efforts to bring Israelis and Palestinians to engage seriously on final status issues will be at the top of the agenda when the Quartet meets in Munich. Our collective task remains to spare no effort to support the search for a negotiated solution that will end the occupation that began in 1967 and end the conflict, establishing an independent and viable Palestinian State with Jerusalem emerging as the capital of two States living side by side in peace and security. We will continue to do all we can to promote dialogue and preserve the stability and security of the region as a whole, in pursuit of the comprehensive regional peace envisaged in the Madrid terms of reference, the relevant resolutions of the Council and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The President: I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): On behalf of Palestine, I congratulate the fraternal country of Bosnia and Herzegovina on its presidency, confident of your wise stewardship, Sir, of the Security Council. We express appreciation as well to the United States of America for its skilled guidance of the Council last month.

I also wish to extend Palestine's sincerest congratulations to the new members of the Security Council, the friendly countries of Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa. We express full confidence in their commitment to upholding the Charter, international law and the Council's resolutions, and we wish them every success in fulfilling their responsibilities. I also convey Palestine's appreciation to the Council members whose terms ended in December 2010, the friendly countries of Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda, who served with skill and dedication in the pursuit of peace and security, including with regard to the efforts to address the question of Palestine.

I also thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing and, through him, express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership on this important issue and his commitment to upholding the principled positions enshrined in the relevant United Nations resolutions.

While a new year should begin with hope and optimism, the Palestinian people regrettably begin yet another year facing serious challenges and hardship under Israel's now nearly 44-year military occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

It is unimaginable that two years have passed since the December 2008-January 2009 Israeli military aggression in the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian people are still being prevented from reconstructing and rehabilitating their communities and lives. There has been no accountability for the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces and no justice reached for the victims. Resolution 1860 (2009) remains unimplemented, and the Israeli blockade of Gaza continues. The debilitating effects of that military aggression and the blockade continue to impair the socio-economic and humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian civilian population and to sow the seeds of despair and hopelessness, with grave consequences for Palestinian society now and in the future.

We continue to call for the immediate and full lifting of the Israeli blockade and the sustained opening of Gaza's border crossings for the movement of persons and goods. This is vital to allowing the long-overdue reconstruction process to truly get under way, and to economic and social recovery through the restoration of livelihoods, dignity and hope. We deplore the escalation of violence, particularly the recent Israeli military attacks in Gaza and the perpetration of yet another extrajudicial killing of a Palestinian in the recent period, raising tensions and instability.

As all are aware, Israel, the occupying Power, also continues to carry out illegal settlement activities throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in violation of international law, United Nations resolutions and the Quartet Road Map obligation to freeze all settlement activities, including so-called natural growth. Israeli settlement construction and expansion have feverishly intensified since the expiration of the so-called partial moratorium, in flagrant contempt of the united calls for a full cessation of all such illegal policies and measures.

The confiscation of Palestinian land, the construction of settlements and so-called outposts, the transfer of more settlers, home demolitions and evictions, the construction of the wall, the imposition of hundreds of checkpoints and other colonization measures have not ceased for a single moment. This has included the approval of thousands of new settlement units, in addition to the construction of thousands of units already under way; the continued construction of the so-called Jerusalem light rail; the demolition of the historic Shepherd's Hotel; and ongoing settler violence against Palestinian civilians and properties — a phenomenon fostered by the military, financial and physical support, and incentives provided by the Israeli Government, including the failure to hold the perpetrators accountable for their crimes.

As indicated in recent letters to the President of the Council, occupied East Jerusalem in particular remains the target of an extremely aggressive campaign to illegally alter its demographic composition, status and distinctly Palestinian Arab character and identity, and to isolate it from the rest of the Palestinian territory. Such illegal actions in East Jerusalem, in addition to provocative statements by Israeli officials, including the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, continue to be inflammatory, threatening further destabilization and stoking religious sensitivities.

The cumulative impact of this illegal Israeli policy on the contiguity, integrity, unity and viability of the Palestinian territory has been destructive and had an equally destructive impact on the drive for peace. Once again, in the tortured history of the peace

process, we face an impasse and the further erosion of trust and confidence between the parties. Israel continues to demonstrate to the Palestinian people in word and deed that it is not a credible peace partner and remains unwilling to abide by the principles underpinning the process and fundamental to reaching any peace treaty.

It is widely recognized that Israel's settlement campaign now poses the most serious threat to the prospect of achieving the two-State solution for peace on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. As such, it constitutes a direct threat to the prospects for peace and security in the Middle East region — a goal long on the Council's agenda. Rather than progressing towards actually bringing an end to the occupation that began in 1967, Israel's settlement campaign has entrenched the occupation and continues to hamper all peace efforts, to the grave detriment of the Palestinian people, the region and the international community, which continues to face the instability and crises caused by the ongoing conflict, which remains at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

As has been repeatedly stated and widely acknowledged, we are at a crossroads. After nearly two decades of the peace process, we are rapidly facing the demise of the two-State solution if nothing is done to stop the unlawful and destructive colonization campaign and to compel Israel to finally abandon its expansionist agenda and abide by its legal obligations and international commitments.

We come before the Security Council once again to appeal to it to uphold its duties under the Charter to address these ongoing Israeli violations in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to help us to overcome the current impasse in the search for peace. We believe that Israel's intensification of settlement activities, despite the global calls and demands for cessation, requires an equally intense response from the international community. A strong message needs to be sent that we are entering a new era and that Israeli defiance of the law and the will of the international community will not be tolerated at the expense of the realization of peace and security, to which our peoples are entitled and for which they continue to suffer and strive.

As early as March 1979, the Security Council, in its resolution 446 (1979), had the foresight to declare its determination:

> "that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East" (*resolution 446 (1979), para. 1*).

In that same resolution, the Council clearly called once again upon Israel, the occupying Power,

> "to abide scrupulously by the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, to rescind its previous measures and to desist from taking any action which would result in changing the legal status and geographical nature and materially affecting the demographic composition of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and, in particular, not to transfer parts of its own civilian population into the occupied Arab territories" (*ibid. para. 3*).

That resolution, and subsequent ones adopted by the Council, reflected the political will of the international community at that time, in line with international humanitarian law. Those resolutions remain valid today. They constitute the basis of the international consensus rejecting Israel's unlawful settlement campaign and deeming it the major obstacle to the achievement of a just and lasting peace on the basis of the two-State solution. Even back then, there was global recognition that the settlements were contrary not only to the law, but also to the aim of ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967.

While the legal positions, principles and concerns remain exactly the same today, the situation on the ground is far worse, owing to Israel's continuous breaches and the failure of the Security Council to implement its resolutions. The inability of the international community to uphold its legal responsibilities under United Nations resolutions and the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, and the failure of the high contracting parties to uphold the obligation, under article 1 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to respect and ensure respect for the Convention in all circumstances, have allowed Israel to persist with its settlement activities with impunity for years, including under the cover of the peace process. The result is now 180 settlements, 100 so-called outposts and over half a million Israeli

settlers in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, including numerous Israeli Government officials, which has deepened the occupation and further compounded this problem.

The settlements are not, of course, the only final status issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which involves the core issues of Palestinian refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, borders, security, water and Palestinian prisoners — all of which must be justly resolved in order to secure a lasting peace. However, it is an established fact that the settlements represent the major obstacle to peace because of the physical destruction being caused to the two-State solution and because the settlements are linked to and seriously affect almost all other final status issues, in particular Jerusalem, borders, security and water. The impact of the settlements on those issues is vastly detrimental and complicates their resolution by prejudicing the outcome of negotiations, as those issues are being illegally predetermined by the occupying Power in its attempt to impose a fait accompli.

At this moment, it is clear that the settlements are an existential threat to the two-State solution, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. With every stone that is laid, the Palestinian territory is further fragmented, the viability of the Palestinian State is further impaired, and the potential for achieving the two-State solution further dwindles, giving increasing rise and lending credence to other alternatives. Action by the international community to reverse the deterioration of the situation and salvage the prospects for peace is thus of the utmost urgency.

In that regard, international consensus on the two-State solution is far greater today than it was in 1947, at which time there was in fact no consensus on partitioning Mandate Palestine. Yet, the political will was found to take that decision, propelling us on a course of conflict and tragedy that remain unresolved to this day.

It is high time that the international community bolster its resolve to act on the consensus of the two-State solution, in fulfilment of its responsibility towards the question of Palestine. In the immediate period, this requires acting on the consensus in rejection of Israel's settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

It is time to find the political courage to implement the Council's resolutions towards the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. We cannot continue to allow one State — Israel, the occupying Power — to continue obstructing the realization of peace and security in the Middle East. It cannot be allowed to continue to oppress and colonize the Palestinian people, denying them their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and independence in their homeland, and to defy the international community without consequence.

In regard to the draft resolution presented to the Security Council by Lebanon on behalf of its sponsors, which number 122 thus far — and we hope that many others will follow suit — I wish to thank our brothers in Lebanon and all of the 122 countries that have sponsored the draft resolution for their efforts and support. The draft resolution, sponsored by a majority of Member States, represents a constructive, collective effort to address this burning issue and to positively chart the way forward, in line with international law, United Nations resolutions and the international position in that regard.

After years of silence on illegal Israeli settlement activities, the Security Council, mandated to address issues endangering international peace and security, is duty-bound to redress the matter at this critical juncture. Israel must be compelled to cease completely its settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and begin its reversal, which would represent a serious reflection of the Israeli intent to roll back the occupation and to move towards ultimately ending it. There is no justification whatsoever for allowing or accepting continued settlement activities while we are trying to negotiate an end to the occupation. We reiterate that settlements and peace negotiations aimed at ending the occupation that began in 1967 are diametrically opposed and cannot coexist.

A cessation of Israeli settlement activities is essential to improving the situation on the ground, building confidence between the two sides and promoting an environment conducive to the resumption of direct peace negotiations that are fair, credible and meaningful and that can be accelerated towards achieving a successful outcome. That outcome is the realization of the two-State solution with the

achievement of the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, and a just, agreed solution for the Palestine refugee question based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

The potential for resuming such a credible peace process is rapidly disappearing. We must not allow the efforts exerted internationally and regionally, including by the United States, the other Quartet members — the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations — the League of Arab States and all other concerned members of the international community, as well as by the Palestinian side, under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, to be in vain or to continue to be arrogantly ignored and undermined by the occupying Power.

We therefore reiterate our call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities and reaffirm its strong position in rejection of Israel's illegal settlement activities. We know there is unanimity among Council members on this matter and we urge them to take action aimed at removing this major obstacle to peace and security in our region.

Israel must be compelled to cease all settlement activities in the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; to abide by its legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention; and to truly commit to the path of peace. Moreover, we firmly believe that the time has come for the Council to reassert its rightful role vis-à-vis the efforts to attain a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Palestinian people and their leadership remain committed to peace. They continue to work hard to rebuild and develop their national institutions and to heal and strengthen their society as they strive to realize their right to self-determination in an independent State. The State-building plan launched by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in August 2009 is being pursued with determination and is moving towards the final implementation stage of the second phase — the "Homestretch to Freedom" — which we hope to complete by August 2011, when we believe our national efforts for independence will converge with the international efforts in this regard.

We are grateful for the strong international support for this initiative. We are also deeply grateful for the principled position that has now been taken by 107 Member States — nine of them seated at this table, not including Palestine — of extending recognition to the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. This effort is of course in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the international consensus on the two-State solution for peace.

We are heartened by the political, humanitarian and development support and solidarity extended to Palestine from all corners of the globe. Thus, despite our deep disappointment and frustration in the recent period, we have not lost hope and will continue to strive to realize our legitimate national rights, refusing to allow the occupying Power to unilaterally determine our fate and destiny as a people. We call on all members of the international community, including the Security Council, to uphold their responsibility to help us end this long and tragic conflict and to finally usher in an era of peace, security and coexistence for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and the Middle East region as a whole.

The President: I thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his statement.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing today.

The United States remains committed to a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is agreed to by the parties. We call on both parties to return to good-faith, direct negotiations, which remain the best path for the parties to reach a solution resolving all issues, ending all claims and establishing a sovereign State of Palestine alongside a secure State of Israel as a key part of a comprehensive peace among Israel and all of its neighbours. There is no better alternative to reaching mutual agreement: the stakes are too high, the sorrows too deep and the issues too complex.

The United States policy on settlements has not changed and will not change. We believe that continued settlement expansion is corrosive not only to

peace efforts and the two-State solution but also to Israel's future itself. The fate of existing settlements is an issue that must be dealt with by the parties, along with other permanent status issues. But like every United States Administration for decades, we do not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity.

The United States policy on Jerusalem also remains unchanged. The status of Jerusalem and all other permanent status issues should be resolved through negotiations between the parties. The United States recognizes that Jerusalem is a deeply important issue for Israelis and Palestinians, as it is for Jews, Muslims and Christians around the world. We believe that through good-faith negotiations the parties can agree to an outcome that realizes the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem and safeguards its status for people around the world.

We are therefore very concerned by the commencement of demolition of the Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem and reports that Israel will consider planning for 1,380 new units near Gilo. These disturbing developments undermine peaceful efforts to achieve the two-State solution and contradict the logic of a reasonable and necessary agreement between the parties. We have long urged both parties to avoid actions, including in Jerusalem, that may undermine trust or prejudge negotiations.

Ultimately, the lack of a resolution to this conflict harms Israel, the Palestinians, the United Sates and the international community. We will continue to press ahead with the parties to resolve the core issues, including Jerusalem, in the context of a peace agreement.

As we have consistently said, permanent status issues can only be resolved through negotiations between the parties, and not by recourse to the Security Council. We therefore consistently oppose attempts to bring these issues to the Council and will continue to do so because such action would move us no closer to the goal of a negotiated final settlement; rather, we believe, it would only complicate efforts to achieve that goal.

We are troubled by the violence in recent weeks involving civilians. We condemn continued and escalating incidents of rocket fire from Gaza into southern Israel. We must work together to stop Hamas and other violent extremists from launching terrorist attacks and from bringing increased misery to the people of Gaza. We once again call on Hamas to immediately release the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, abducted by Hamas and held since 2006. We also call upon the Government of Israel to fully investigate the deaths of at least three Palestinian civilians in encounters with Israeli forces in the West Bank since 1 January.

We remain concerned about the situation in Gaza. The United States is working with the Palestinian Authority, Israel and international partners to improve the lives of ordinary people there and to increase the flow of needed commercial goods and construction supplies while taking appropriate measures to ensure that they do not fall into the wrong hands.

We are pleased with Israel's decision to allow exports from Gaza, which will foster legitimate economic growth there. This is an important and overdue step, and we look forward to seeing it implemented soon. We also welcome the recent approval of additional United Nations and international reconstruction projects for Gaza.

The United States remains convinced that peace in this troubled region is both necessary and possible. We will persist. We will push the parties to grapple with the core issues. As Secretary of State Clinton said in her speech to the Saban Forum in December, in the context of our private conversations with the parties, we will offer our own ideas and bridging proposals when appropriate. We will also work with the Palestinians to continue laying the foundations for a future Palestinian State. Israelis deserve to be able to live in security, at peace with their neighbours and confident in their future. And Palestinians deserve to have the dignity and justice of a State of their own and the freedom to chart their own destiny.

Let me now turn to Lebanon. We echo the Secretary-General's statement of support for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and his call to all parties to refrain from any interference or influence in its work. We welcome the recent announcement by the Prosecutor for the Tribunal that he has filed an indictment related to the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 22 others. This represents an important step towards ending the era of impunity for political murder in Lebanon and achieving justice for the Lebanese people.

We urge that Lebanon's constitutional process be followed in selecting its next Government and we encourage all parties to avoid threats or actions that could cause instability in Lebanon or the region. We urge this Council and the international community to remain firm in its support for Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, resolute in its commitment to all Security Council resolutions related to Lebanon and vigilant to threats to international peace and security.

We commend the efforts of France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and other key international and regional actors working to maintain calm in Lebanon and ensure that the Tribunal's work continues unimpeded.

We support French President Sarkozy's intention to form a contact group to help resolve the political crisis in Lebanon. We support a political outcome that reduces tension and allows the Lebanese Government to return to the business of the people without undermining the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. The Lebanese people should not have to choose between justice and stability. Like all nations, Lebanon deserves both.

Finally, let me say a few words about the situation in Tunisia, which is important to the Middle East as a whole. The United States stands with the entire international community in bearing witness to this brave and determined struggle for the universal rights that we must all uphold. We will long remember the images of the Tunisian people seeking to make their voices heard. We urge all parties to maintain calm and avoid violence, and we call on the interim Tunisian Government to respect human rights and to hold free and fair elections that reflect the true will and aspirations of the Tunisian people. The United States is prepared to assist the people and the interim Government of Tunisia as they move towards these elections.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): As Council members know, the sixth paragraph of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War states that "[t]he Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies". The International Committee of the Red Cross has recognized that the purpose of that paragraph of the Convention is to prevent the recurrence of actions carried out by certain States during the Second World War, which transferred a portion of the population of territories occupied by them for political and ethnic reasons with a view to colonizing those territories. Those explanations require no further comment.

Article 8, paragraph 2(b)(viii) of the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court identifies as a war crime "[t]he transfer, directly or indirectly, by the Occupying Power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies".

After having reaffirmed in resolution 446 (1979) that the Fourth Geneva Convention applied to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, the Security Council affirmed in paragraph 1 of the resolution that

> "the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East".

The Security Council has reaffirmed that position for over 30 years, including in resolutions 449 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980) and 478 (1980) regarding settlement activities. Similarly, the General Assembly has reaffirmed it in dozens of resolutions. Most recently, resolution 65/104 reaffirms that settlement activities in Arab territories occupied since 1967 are illegal and constitute an obstacle to achieving peace. The Assembly has called for the immediate and complete cessation of settlement activities.

The International Court of Justice concluded in paragraph 120 of its 2004 advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the separation wall that the settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, were created in violation of international law. It is also worth noting that the Road Map adopted by the international Quartet and by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003) calls on Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth of settlements, and to immediately dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001.

The Joint Understanding of the 2007 Annapolis Conference reaffirmed the fact that the parties were to continue to implement their mutual commitments in accordance with the Road Map until the achievement of a peace agreement. This includes Israel's commitment to freezing all settlement activities. The Security Council adopted the contents of the Joint

Understanding in resolution 1850 (2008). Pursuant to that declaration, the international Quartet continues to call for implementation of the provisions of the Road Map, including freezing all settlement activities, most recently in its statement of 21 September 2010.

The provisions of international law with respect to the settlements include the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, and the positions of the Quartet on the subject of Israeli settlement activities. However, these are the very positions and provisions that Israel continues to disregard and to defy. In point of fact, Israel's settlement policy was established and has continued since 1967. To date, neither international legitimacy nor the peace efforts has not dissuaded Israel or stopped it from carrying out settlement activities. For example, the numerous settlements today include more than 517,000 settlers within the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. This is more than twice the number that existed on the eve of the 1993 Oslo agreement. It is striking that the number of settlers since 1990 has increased by 4.9 per cent annually — three times more than the rate of growth of Israeli society, which is at only 1.5 per cent.

Since the Israeli Government lifted the freeze on settlements last September — a freeze that was only partial, in point of fact — the settlement activities have not only reached their previous rate of growth but doubled to the point that, during the first six weeks after that September date, they had made up for that 10-month freeze and even gone beyond it.

Those are the latest developments in settlement activity, the latest challenge of which was on 16 January 2011, when Israel declared that it was building 1,400 new housing units.

Israel's settlement policy is not only a challenge to the will of the international community and a violation of the provisions of international law. It carries the danger that Palestinian land is being absorbed and dismantled, and in that way the basis of the two-State solution is being undermined.

While we recognize all the international efforts to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict — in particular the efforts of President Obama's Administration — if the Council today cannot oppose the grave dangers of Israel's settlement activities, then its credibility and effectiveness will be hampered. Our image will be affected because the impression would then be that a double standard is being applied with regard to certain States while the actions of another are ignored, as if that State were above the law and could not be subject to any accountability.

We therefore submitted yesterday a draft resolution on Israel's settlement activities, and it has been circulated to the Council in blue ink (S/2011/24). We are proud to see the unprecedented number of sponsors for this draft — more than 120 States — and we express our full gratitude to them. The purpose of this draft resolution is to ensure that the Council will stand on the side of justice, and we trust it will play its role in supporting this draft resolution unanimously in the very near future.

Just as the Council has responded and spoken in a single voice when adopting historic resolutions — resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968), 338 (1973), 446 (1979), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008) — we invite it to speak with a single voice on the settlement activity and say that enough is enough.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs for his briefing and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his statement.

France associates itself with the statement to be made by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

The peace process in the Middle East remains at an impasse. On 21 September the Quartet established a one-year deadline to achieve a framework agreement on all final status issues for the creation of a sovereign, independent, viable and democratic Palestinian State living in peace alongside Israel within safe and recognized borders. We recall the importance of achieving this goal because more than ever, time is working against peace.

Attaining this objective in 2011 means the swift resumption of negotiations on final status issues, which is the only way to bring an end to the conflict. The deadline established by the Quartet is ambitious, but this urgency is dictated by the situation on the ground, where the viability of a two-State solution seems more threatened every day. In the immediate term, moves to recreate the conditions for confidence that are necessary for negotiations, both politically and on the ground, are awaited.

The parameters for a negotiated solution are known, and we do not need to reinvent the foundation of a process that has been under way for some 20 years now. Moreover, the European Union publicly recalled those parameters recently. Accordingly, France deems it necessary, in line with what Mrs. Clinton said in her speech at the Saban Forum, to call on the parties to provide their positions on the main final status issues. We welcome the fact that the United States is planning to provide the parties with its proposals if that becomes necessary, but we recall that a close involvement of the other members of the Quartet and certain Arab States in those efforts would increase their chances of succeeding. The international community, including within this Council, must indeed be able to support those efforts in all their forms and confer on them the necessary legitimacy. We thus hope that the forthcoming meeting of the Quartet, on 5 February, will contribute to recreating conditions of confidence that are necessary between the parties.

France and the European Union have reiterated their availability to make a substantial contribution to a peace agreement and to the arrangements that that would involve. That is the message that the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Michèle Alliot-Marie, while visiting the region from the 19 to 23 January, will bring to the parties, as well as to the two main regional actors in the peace process, Egypt and Jordan. The support of States in the region for the political process, based on the Arab Peace Initiative, remains crucial.

This objective involves preserving the viability of the two-State solution on the ground. Given the increasing speed of construction, the international community, in particular this Council, cannot relax its attention with regard to the question of settlement activity. As the European Ministers recalled on 13 December, settlement activity is illegal. It is an obstacle to peace, as it undermines confidence between parties and the viability of prospects for peace.

France desires that initiatives in this area may constitute a constructive element of the effort to relaunch discussions between the parties on all final status issues. There will be no solution to the conflict without a cessation of settlement activity, including with regard to natural growth of existing settlements.

We are asking in particular for the cessation of all measures that affect the demographic balance in Jerusalem, which is destined to become the capital of the two States. In East Jerusalem, settlement activity is not only illegal but increases the likelihood of violent incidents in the Holy City, with political implications that are to be feared. At present, France is concerned by the situation and condemns the recent demolition of Shepherd Hotel in order to build a new settlement in the Palestinian quarter of Sheikh Jarrah. We call on the parties to avoid all provocation in a context of increasing tensions. This situation on the ground, like the increasingly fragile political outlook, is likely to undermine the projects of the Fayyad plan, which is main tangible achievement on the way to the attainment of a Palestinian State since the Annapolis Conference in 2007.

The support of the international community for the Palestinian Authority and for President Abbas in order to strengthen the institutions for a future Palestinian State must not waver. In order to consolidate this international support, the President of France announced our country's willingness to organize a second donor conference in Paris in the spring. This should be linked to the political process; it can in no way be an economic substitute for the peace process. The challenge is also for Israel to align itself with this movement in a much more determined way, particularly in the West Bank. Gestures have been made on the ground, but they remain insufficient, especially in terms of freedom of movement and access.

The situation in Gaza continues to be of concern. A change in approach, without infringing on Israel's security imperatives, is necessary and possible. Our Minister of State, who is going to Gaza, will reaffirm our willingness to contribute to this.

France welcomes the Israeli Government's recent decision to authorize the export of several categories of products from the area and to develop infrastructure at crossing points. This announcement is in the right direction, as it promotes the growth of Gaza's economy by supporting the development of its private sector. We should work together to ensure that it is rapidly implemented, and secure complementary measures that can help achieve a comprehensive lifting of the blockade. In that regard, we are also awaiting sped up implementation of United Nations construction projects and a relaxation in restrictions on movement in and out of the Gaza Strip. The European Union has proposed concrete assistance in that regard.

We must not forget Gilad Shalit, who has been a hostage in the Gaza Strip for four years now, in disregard of the principles of international humanitarian law and basic humanity. France remains ready to help achieve his immediate and unconditional release. We also continue to call for an immediate halt to all violence, particularly rocket fire into southern Israel.

With regard to the political crisis that Lebanon is currently experiencing, France supports the Lebanese authorities and remains committed to respect for institutions and the framework defined by the Taif Agreement, as well as democratic principles and the stability, independence and sovereignty of Lebanon. We encourage the Lebanese people and representatives of Lebanese institutions to find a solution to the current crisis through dialogue. Given recent developments, following discussions with the main Lebanese and regional stakeholders, France's President has proposed international consultations to help Lebanon overcome the difficulties it faces. France is of course coordinating its efforts with the Secretary-General.

With regard to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, on 17 January the Prosecutor submitted an indictment to the judge, thus launching the judicial phase of the Tribunal's work. France of course fully supports the work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which was established by resolution 1757 (2007). We call on all parties, especially those in Lebanon and the region, to respect the Tribunal's independence, to reject any political manipulation and to refrain from hindering the Tribunal's work. Lastly, in this very unstable environment, we call on all parties to respect resolution 1701 (2006), and commend the work done in southern Lebanon by the United Nations Interim Force in that country.

The regional aspect of the peace process is crucial. We are working to create the conditions for a renewal of negotiations between Syria and Israel, in close cooperation with the United States and Turkey.

The Middle East is a region of great cultural, human and religious diversity. Peace and stability there is inconceivable without the preservation of the culture of tolerance and respect that is the foundation of the region's richness. The recent attacks aimed at religious communities demonstrate a desire to fuel hatred. We must join forces with those countries that have been attacked so we can together fight terrorism and combat those who want to promote the notion of a conflict between civilizations. The perpetrators of such terrorist acts must be prosecuted. Members of religious minorities must be able to live in safety in their countries. France stresses the importance of the effective protection of minorities, of respect for their freedom of religion and belief and of the promotion of tolerance. We encourage and support the efforts of the Governments of the region to that end.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): First of all, let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe for his briefing.

Our debate is taking place at a time when the peace process in the Middle East remains at an impasse. It should be remembered that this follows Israel's lifting of the moratorium on Jewish settlement activity in the Palestinian territories. My delegation therefore urges both parties to resume direct dialogue, which is an essential condition for arriving at an acceptable and definitive settlement of the conflict. As we have always emphasized, the goal is the establishment of a viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders.

We wish to reaffirm our appreciation for the diplomatic efforts being made by the United States of America, the Quartet and countries of the region aimed at restarting direct peace negotiations. We urge them to continue their efforts. In that regard, we welcome the announcement of an upcoming Quartet meeting to be held in Munich in the next few days.

There will be no lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis unless it is part of a process towards a comprehensive negotiated settlement of the various crises in the region. We are convinced that the effective involvement of countries of the region in peace talks is absolutely essential to achieving these goals.

With regard to Lebanon, we urge the country's political leaders to pursue dialogue and national reconciliation in order to ensure unified participation in a comprehensive peace process in the region. We hope that the current political crisis associated with the work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon will be resolved through negotiations.

Lastly, we reaffirm our support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and its

mandate. We urge Israelis and Lebanese to cooperate with UNIFIL to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, let me extend my thanks to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his report on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. I should like to point out that his briefing on recent events in the region is very disturbing. I should also like to thank Ambassador Riyad Mansour for his statement to the Council.

We are gathered in the Council today to consider the situation in the Middle East and, in particular, the issue of settlements in the Palestinian territories. That is without a doubt an important issue that must be resolved in the context of the search for a negotiated settlement to a long-standing historic conflict. We believe that the settlements violate international law, the agreements established in the Road Map and the negotiations conducted by the Quartet.

The Middle East issue has historically occupied a permanent place in Colombia's foreign policy, which includes a vision of Statehood. Even prior to the General Assembly's resolution approving the partition of Palestine in 1947, Colombia had referred to the importance of ensuring genuine viability in the process, which should be both stable and lasting. Former Colombian President Alfonso López, our first Permanent Representative to the United Nations, said in 1947 that "to divide Palestine without a real alternative for the Palestinians would be a monumental error". History has shown that our illustrious compatriot was right. It was as true then as it is now that we need to find a settlement that provides a better basis for understanding and a comprehensive solution to the unstable situation in the region.

Consistent with this conviction, Colombia abstained in the voting on the resolution, despite our belief that it was just to provide a national homeland for Jews and Palestinians alike. However, we never had any doubts about the core issue. Since then, and in the following decades, the Colombian position has remained clear. Israel is a State with the right to exist in peace within secure borders, while the Palestinians have the right to their own State where they can live side by side with Israel in peace and work for common prosperity.

Whenever we have been in the Security Council, we have voted in favour of resolutions that seek to establish lasting peace in the region. Moreover, on a number of occasions, we have sponsored proposals to that end within the various United Nations bodies. We believe that two ancient peoples who have contributed so much to science, the arts and the world economy have the right and the obligation to live in peace. Jewish and Palestinian immigrants alike have contributed to the prosperity and even the identity of our country. We view with interest and approval any approach aimed at achieving and consolidating lasting peace in the region.

For Colombia, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the obligation not to use force in international relations and the self-determination of peoples are fundamental principles, as are human rights and respect for the dignity of all, without exception.

Israelis and Palestinians can no longer remain in a situation of confrontation and mistrust. We strongly urge both parties to continue negotiations on the basis of mutual respect and recognition of the identity and rights of each people.

Colombia has the highest regard for peace, built on a solid and realistic basis, and we offer our firm support to every possible approach aimed at promoting sustainable and balanced solutions in the Middle East.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing on developments in the situation in the Middle East.

The situation in the region remains tense and of particular concern to us is the lack of progress towards the resumption of direct Palestinian and Israeli dialogue. The current visit to the Middle East by the President of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, is focused first and foremost on finding ways to renew the regional peace process. During his visit, the President of Russia has laid out our view of how to achieve lasting peace in the region. First, both sides should refrain from unilateral moves that may predetermine the outcome of a settlement, respect their international obligations, display political will and a willingness to adopt confidence-building measures, and promote sustainable dialogue that would facilitate the effective settlement of the whole range of final status issues.

Israel should freeze its settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which violate international law. It should honour the requirements of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the decisions of the Quartet of international mediators. Acts such as demolishing the Palestinian Shepherd's Hotel in order to build more settlement units only further complicate the situation. We trust that the Israeli leadership will finally heed the unwavering requirements of the international community. At the same time, the legitimate security interests of Israel must be ensured and rocket attacks on Israeli territory must end.

Of equal relevance is the objective of restoring intra-Palestinian unity on the Palestine Liberation Organization platform. Russia continues to actively facilitate this by supporting the relevant mediation efforts, primarily those of Egypt.

Along with these efforts, there is a need for further measures to lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip in order to improve the humanitarian and socio-economic situation there. Among the efforts needed to ensure progress in a Palestinian and Israeli settlement is to focus on generally recognized international legal bases, including Security Council resolutions, the decisions of the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The forthcoming ministerial meeting of the Quartet on 5 February in Munich, convened on Russia's initiative, should determine practical steps for a swift resumption of the Palestinian and Israeli negotiation process. The ultimate aim of this process is to implement the two-State solution of Palestine and Israel coexisting in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Russia consistently supports the right of Palestinians to establish their own independent, contiguous and viable State, with its capital in East Jerusalem. Everyone — Palestinians, Israelis and the entire Middle East region — will gain from that.

In speaking at the joint press conference with Palestinian President Abbas in Jericho, President Medvedev confirmed that the Russian initiative to convene an international conference on the Middle East in Moscow remains on the table. The aim is not just to meet, but to achieve significant progress towards achieving a comprehensive Middle East settlement. If we manage to move the negotiating process forward, including during consultations with the Quartet, the prospects for the Moscow conference will become clearer.

Recent events in Lebanon concerning the resignation of the Government are of serious concern to us. Of principal importance now is that the situation remains in the constitutional sphere. To that end, the Lebanese parties need to display calm and restraint and avoid making moves that would exacerbate the situation and harm both the Lebanese and the entire region. Despite existing political disagreements, the search for dialogue-based solutions to contentious issues on the national agenda is in the interest of all Lebanese and must be maintained.

The work of the Special Tribunal has moved into a new phase. We trust that the decision of the Tribunal will be considered extremely carefully and based on evidence. This will not only directly determine the triumph of justice and the fair prosecution of perpetrators, but will also maintain peace and stability in the country and in the region as a whole.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing. I have also listened carefully to the statement made by the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

The current situation in the Middle East remains complex and fragile and is a source of concern. The international community should continue to push for a political settlement of the question of Palestine. This is not only in line with the universal expectations of the people of the region, including the Palestinians and Israelis, and the international community, but also touches directly on lasting peace and security in the Middle East.

China has always maintained that, on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Middle East Road Map to peace, Palestine and Israel should settle their differences through dialogue and negotiation that will result in the establishment of an independent State of Palestine so that Palestine and Israel can coexist in peace.

At present, the issue of settlements is the greatest obstacle to the resumption of direct talks. China urges Israel to immediately and completely cease settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem. China hopes that Israel will adopt a serious and responsible

approach and create the conditions necessary to building mutual trust and relaunching the peace talks.

China welcomes and supports all international peace efforts to resolve Palestinian and Israeli differences and to restart dialogue and negotiation. We hope that Palestinians and Israelis will make common efforts for the early resumption of talks and the achievement of substantive results.

The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in the Gaza Strip, remains harsh and serious. That is not good for regional stability, nor is it conducive to the creation of appropriate conditions for peace talks between Palestine and Israel. We hope the parties concerned will effectively implement the relevant United Nations resolutions and quickly and completely lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip and return to the people of Gaza normal and respectful conditions for survival and development. The international community should continue to provide more assistance and support to the Palestinian people. China is ready to join hands with the various parties and to continue to play a constructive role for the early achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I wish to thank Mr. Pascoe for his extensive briefing and the representative of Palestine for his statement.

The year 2011 marks twenty years since the Madrid Conference launched the Middle East peace process. The goal of the international community should be to ensure that this is the last year of the process and the beginning of a lasting agreement between the parties. The current stalemate is deeply damaging. The longer it continues and the more facts that are created on the ground, the slimmer the prospects for peace become. The urgency and gravity of the situation should not be lost on anyone.

So it is critical that the parties find a way to restart negotiations, which represent the best way to achieve a sovereign, viable and contiguous Palestinian state living in peace and security alongside a safe and secure Israel and other neighbours in the region. The international community must continue to stress the importance of this to both parties.

For renewed negotiations to have a chance of success, the parties should be clear on the parameters within which they are working: a two-State solution, based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two States and with a fair settlement for refugees.

If we are to overcome the current impasse, it is also vital that the parties refrain from taking unilateral actions that make peace harder to achieve.

The demolition of Shepherds Hotel in East Jerusalem and the plans to expand the Israeli settlement of Gilo by a further 1380 units are exactly the sort of actions that must be avoided. The United Kingdom has always been clear that settlements are illegal and an obstacle to peace. Pushing ahead with settlement activity is a deeply unhelpful move. With actions such as those, it is no surprise that this Council has been asked to consider a resolution condemning settlement activity.

Creating an atmosphere conducive to peace entails responsibilities on both sides. Israel's legitimate security concerns must be met. Israelis should not have to live under the constant threat of rocket attacks and random acts of violence. We are increasingly concerned by recent incidents in the Gaza area. We strongly condemn the continuing rocket fire by militants in Gaza, who target and endanger thousands of Israeli citizens with the goal of provoking reaction and further stalling the peace process.

We remain concerned by the prevailing situation inside Gaza. There has been some welcome progress: the move from a list of permitted goods to a list of banned goods and an increase in the volume of imports. But more fundamental changes are needed in order to achieve pre-2007 levels of imports and exports, and greater effort is required to improve cooperation with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

The recent Israeli measures to facilitate exports from Gaza are welcome, but they need to be swiftly implemented. That means action on the ground. The United Kingdom is ready to help. We are coordinating closely with Baroness Ashton's office on her package of proposals for Gaza: expanding the infrastructure at Kerem Shalom, providing security equipment to facilitate exports and expanding the role of the European Union's Police Mission in the occupied territories to provide training in border and crossings management for the Palestinian Authority.

Progress must be judged by impacts on the ground rather than simply through counting inputs, such as truck numbers. Aid dependency and unemployment remain high, and construction of schools is still held up. We are urging Israel to address those issues concretely. Gaza's aid dependency will continue until the economy recovers, which is why it is so important to make progress on exports and to improve access to land and to fishing areas. The surest way to safeguard Israel's security is through empowering Gaza's business fraternity.

Turning briefly to Lebanon, the events of the past week could have grave implications for Lebanon and for regional stability. We call on all parties to work together for a peaceful resolution to the crisis caused by the decision by the opposition to withdraw from government. We condemn continuing attempts to undermine the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which must be allowed to carry out its work without hindrance or impediment. Justice needs to be done, and there must be an end to impunity for political assassinations in Lebanon.

We will engage strongly over the coming months with the United States, the parties to the conflict and with our European Union and United Nations partners to find a way to re-start meaningful negotiations to achieve a two-State solution.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his statement.

Germany aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the delegation of the European Union (EU) on behalf of the Union.

For too long, the peoples in the Middle East have suffered from conflict and confrontation. They aspire to peace, freedom and a decent life. It is our long-standing conviction that good governance, the rule of law and religious tolerance, including protection of religious minorities, form the basic pillars upon which durable stability and prosperity are based.

It is time to finally make decisive progress towards a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A just, lasting and comprehensive solution is needed if we want to prevent the conflict from continuing to overshadow the lives of millions of people and from being a catalyst of extremism and violence. A continuation of the current impasse is not an option.

The goal is clear: we want to see the State of Israel and a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security. That objective is shared by practically the entire international community. It has repeatedly been endorsed by the parties themselves. We remain convinced that there is no viable alternative to the two-State solution.

There is also broad international consensus about the key parameters of the solution: borders based on the 1967 lines, with agreed territorial swaps; Jerusalem as the future capital of two States; an agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to the refugee question; and arrangements that ensure the security, both collective and individual, of the Israeli and Palestinian people.

Progress toward that goal is urgently needed. I wish to make four points that we believe are fundamental to making progress.

First, sustainable peace can be achieved only through negotiations. We urge both parties to return to direct negotiations and to engage substantively on final status issues. Such negotiations must be conducted with the goal of achieving a framework agreement within the 12-month period defined by the Middle East Quartet.

Secondly, both sides must work hard on creating an atmosphere conducive to progress. That includes abiding by international law and previous commitments, particularly the provisions of the Road Map. As the EU has consistently and repeatedly made clear, the continuation of settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories is illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. It must stop. At the same time, the Palestinian side must refrain from incitement and violence.

Thirdly, Palestinian State-building needs to be continued. Sustainable peace will need to rest on two pillars: a negotiated settlement and viable institutions of the future State of Palestine. We congratulate the Palestinian National Authority on the progress achieved so far in institution-building, including implementation of the Fayyad Plan.

Fourth is Gaza. If we are to prevent the further isolation and radicalization of the population in Gaza, the policy of closure must end. Recent decisions by the

Government of Israel to ease access to and exports from Gaza are steps in the right direction. Those decisions need to be fully implemented. Import and export flows should return to pre-2007 levels. Complementary measures are necessary to allow for the economic recovery of Gaza, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. In that respect, we call for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

We remain seriously concerned about the fate of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been in captivity for much too long. He must be released without further delay.

Germany commends the tireless efforts of and valuable services delivered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and this year will continue to support UNRWA by contributing an additional amount of $8 million.

Finally, the strong support of the international community is crucial to progress in the peace process. We need an even more active role of the Middle East Quartet. We welcome the Quartet meeting of principals in Munich scheduled for 5 February, and expect a strong political signal in that regard. The active backing of Arab States is necessary to creating an atmosphere conducive to progress. We need to send a clear and unambiguous message that we stick to our shared vision of two States living side by side in peace and security. We need to be clear about the parameters of such a solution and our willingness to support its implementation, as required.

The international community stands ready to invest considerably in a peaceful settlement and to help shape the way forward, but only the parties themselves can make the crucial compromises and lay the foundations for a better future. It is up to them to take the decisive steps and commit themselves unambiguously.

With regard to Lebanon, we call on all parties to abide by their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). I would like to recall that the decision to establish the Special Tribunal was taken following a request by Lebanon and on the basis of negotiations between Lebanon and the United Nations. It was created in order to bring stability to the country and to end impunity by prosecuting persons responsible for the attack of 14 February 2005. The reasons for establishing the Special Tribunal remain valid. Germany calls on all parties to support the important work of the Tribunal, to respect its independence and to refrain from political interference and coercion. The successful conclusion of the work of the Special Tribunal is essential to long-term stability in Lebanon. Germany will continue to support the Tribunal.

Regional efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation are very welcome. At the same time, we cannot compromise when it comes to justice.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): My delegation thanks Mr. Pascoe for his briefing to the Council. We would like to associate ourselves with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We also thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his comprehensive statement.

The Middle East peace process, including the question of Palestine, has been on the agenda of the Council for more than 60 years without resolution. Perhaps we need to collectively ask ourselves the question: Is there anything we could or should do differently that may lead to the desired outcome?

We pose that question in the light of the fact that we have repeatedly articulated the problems, but we do not seem to move forward in terms of addressing them. As we continuously congregate in this manner to discuss the matter every month, without making any concrete progress, the people of Palestine and Israel are no nearer to living in peace as neighbours than they were 60 years ago.

My delegation is of the view that the Security Council should recommit to the following key principles. The Security Council has the Charter-given mandate to address all matters of international peace and security, without exception; and, in view of that responsibility, the Council cannot delegate or outsource its responsibility to address the situation in the Middle East, in particular the Palestinian question.

A few months ago, we were hopeful that the direct talks on final status issues between the leaders of Israel and Palestine would yield positive results. However, that move was once again frustrated by Israel's intransigence with regard to the halting of settlement construction in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. The continuous building of settlements, the freezing of which is a condition for the

Palestinians to go back to the negotiating table, seems to be a major setback to the peace talks. As documented in many international legal texts, including article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying Power from transferring its own civilian population to the territory that it occupies, the building of those settlements is illegal. In that regard, we call on Israel to act in good faith and reimpose a moratorium on settlement construction as a show of goodwill and confidence in the negotiations.

It is more than 16 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords, which represent the beginning of formal negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Instead of resolving the matter, or at least improving the situation, it has become worse. More Palestinians have been displaced; there has been more curtailment of movement and access; and many more illegal settlements have been built.

However, the continued settlement building ominously changes the geographical make-up of Palestine and has the potential to render impossible the capacity to bring about a two-State solution, in line with the overwhelming call for the creation of a sovereign, independent, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, coexisting peacefully alongside the State of Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The creation of a viable Palestinian State with the rights and responsibilities inherent to statehood, within a peaceful environment, is in the interest of Israel, as its security can be achieved only through peace.

South Africa calls on both parties to return to the negotiating table, as they know best the critical issues that continue to divide them. Among other issues, those relate to borders, settlements, water, Jerusalem, security and refugees. The international community can assist the parties only once they themselves resolve to commit and show the political willingness to find a lasting solution. Certainly, an imposed solution will not work.

The blockade of Gaza continues to frustrate the lives of the inhabitants of that territory and has contributed directly to the increase in unemployment and poverty, thus impacting negatively on people's livelihoods. The blockade has also resulted in delays in the provision of humanitarian assistance, as the entry of humanitarian agencies, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Development Programme, into Gaza has been limited. We therefore call on Israel to end the blockade of Gaza, which is illegal in terms of international humanitarian law, including article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and myriad Security Council resolutions.

Despite the many challenges facing UNRWA and other United Nations agencies in Palestine, the Organization continues to play a vital role in the enhancement of the livelihoods of the Palestinian refugees and people. South Africa continues to support the Agency and its activities, including for this year. In addition, in partnership with the India-Brazil-South Africa trilateral mechanism, South Africa continues to support Palestine, including by providing support for projects in Gaza.

South Africa also condemns the continued shelling of Gaza by Israeli forces and concomitantly calls on the people of Gaza to refrain from the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel. Recently, the Secretary-General acknowledged that:

> "the situation in the Middle East is tense and is likely to remain so, unless and until a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem can be reached" (*S/2010/607, para. 13*).

In light of this observation, we call on the Council and other stakeholders to accelerate efforts towards the holistic resolution of the Middle East crisis, including the Lebanese and Syrian tracks.

In conclusion, my delegation takes note of the recent recognition of the State of Palestine by more Members of the United Nations. We cannot avoid the reality of an independent State of Palestine. Our responsibility remains to ensure that it is viable, contiguous, sustainable and in a position to exist peacefully with its neighbour, the State of Israel.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I would like to join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing, and the Permanent Observer for his statement.

For too long, the situation in the Middle East has remained a matter of grave concern to the international community. Today's debate opens against the backdrop of a deadlock in direct negotiations and a deteriorating security situation in the region, as Mr. Pascoe reported

this morning. Nevertheless, this debate affords us the opportunity to take stock of the preceding year. In doing so, we need to soberly reflect on the circumstances that hindered the sustenance of the resumed direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Our unequivocal message, today as always, is a simple one. There should be an independent State of Palestine existing side by side with a secure State of Israel, free from threat and intimidation. I have no doubt that the entire Council is united on this. Speaking with one voice, it is important for the Council once again to call on the parties to resume direct negotiations without further delay on all the permanent status issues, in particular borders, security, the status of Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees.

Each of the parties can play an important role in fostering peace. To this end, we call on Israel to take concrete steps to freeze all settlement-related activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as a confidence-building measure. The planned construction of 1,400 new settler homes and the approval two days ago by the Jerusalem City Council of 122 housing units to be built in East Talpiot and Pisgat Ze'ev in East Jerusalem not only are provocative, but run counter to the objective of building confidence. Indeed, such actions provide fodder for resentment and increased violence. In the same vein, the incursion yesterday by Israeli tanks into northern Gaza, east of Beit Hanoun, which resulted in the death of 23-year old Amjad al-Zaanein, in retaliation for Palestinian militant attacks, was unhelpful to the peace process.

The Palestinians also have a role to play in building confidence. It is important for Palestinian leaders to signal their readiness to return to the negotiating table through enhanced efforts to forge unity and deal with acts of militancy. Rocket attacks and other harmful actions undermine peace and security. As is well known, in this conflict such actions have often attracted swift reprisals. We believe that the prospect of a Palestinian State, recognized and supported by the international community, should serve as an incentive to all Palestinians to sheath their swords and embrace the peace process. It is beyond doubt that neither militancy nor military might will resolve the lingering conflict.

We call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate in their words and deeds a strong desire to re-engage in a speedy negotiated settlement of all the core issues of the conflict. In addition, they must recommit themselves to their obligations under the Road Map. They should endeavour to overcome the obstacles that have hindered the realization of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders. The international community, and more especially the Quartet, should remain engaged and exert pressure on the two parties to negotiate in good faith.

We commend Israel's announcement last month of further measures to ease the blockade on Gaza. We hope that the time will come sooner rather than later when the blockade will be lifted completely. In the meantime, we urge the people of Gaza and other stakeholders to utilize only legitimate channels to transport persons, goods and materials out of the territory in order to address Israel's legitimate security concerns. In this connection, we acknowledge the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to address Israel's security concerns.

With regard to Lebanon, we want to stress the need for calm and restraint. We call on the United Nations and concerned parties to continue to support the independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon. We commend the Special Tribunal for Lebanon for its work in very challenging circumstances. It is our expectation that the Tribunal's findings will provide a good basis for justice, peace and stability to reign in Lebanon. We commend President Michel Sleiman's resolute support for the independence and mandate of the Special Tribunal. We underscore the need for continuous dialogue amongst the parties to preserve the stability of the country.

In the final analysis, achieving lasting peace in the Middle East will depend not on bullets or blockades, but on the courage and determination to make painful sacrifices in support of peace. Lasting peace requires accommodation and flexibility on both sides to reach necessary compromises in the negotiations. I hope that the parties can demonstrate this spirit.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his detailed briefing. I also thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his remarks.

Since Israel's decision not to renew the settlement moratorium in September 2010, the construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories has gained considerable pace. This is not only illegal, but also undermines the peace process, poisons the political environment and potentially exposes Israeli settlers to danger as tensions rise.

From a strategic point of view, the greatest danger is that the accelerating pace of construction risks rendering the two-State solution politically very difficult to implement, if not impossible. It is true that, in the past, Israeli populations have been withdrawn from occupied land as part of agreements or unilateral decisions by Israel. It is also true, however, that the construction that has taken place in the occupied territories in recent years tends to alter the very demographic and social realities on the ground — including in Jerusalem — and is therefore much more difficult to reverse. Settlement activity must therefore cease immediately and completely. We once again reiterate our call on Israel to heed the unanimous call of the international community in this regard.

We continue to support the efforts led by the United States Administration and regional actors to restore the peace process. We call on both parties, in particular Israel, not to miss any opportunity to make strides towards the resumption of substantive and action-oriented negotiations. We know that requires a great deal of political courage, as peacemaking quite often involves high risks. There is, however, greater risk and suffering in accepting a state of permanent conflict or tension. The present hour demands nothing less than Statesmanship. We fully concur with the Secretary-General that peace and Palestinian Statehood cannot be delayed further.

It was precisely with that in mind — that is, the urgent need for fair and balanced negotiations — that Brazil decided to recognize the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders. The decision does not represent a loss of faith in a negotiated solution, and it should not be construed as such, much less as an incentive to unilateral moves. To the contrary, we all know that the effective establishment of a functioning Palestinian State cannot come about but through negotiations. Brazil's decision is therefore to be taken as a contribution to a fair and balanced settlement between the parties, one that can achieve the international community's common goal of two States living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. The Council has a key role to play in that effort.

Brazil remains ready and willing to consider ideas and initiatives to that end. One of them is the draft resolution on the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories that was put forward yesterday, which has so far been sponsored by more than 120 delegations, including mine. Such a measure would send the right signal to the parties that the Council and the international community stand by fundamental decisions and are serious in their attempt to help ensure the long-term feasibility of the two-State solution.

We welcome the measures taken by Israel to ease the blockade on the Gaza Strip — especially with regard to exports of agricultural products, textiles and other goods — as it will benefit the local economy and generate badly needed jobs and income. We must all continue to work with the Palestinians to turn this overture into new development projects.

That is what we are trying to do bilaterally and through the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) initiative, as was just mentioned by the Permanent Representative of South Africa. Last November, the IBSA Forum approved a project for the partial reconstruction of the Red Crescent Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza, with resources allocated from the IBSA Trust Fund. But much remains to be done.

As we have said in the past, easing the blockade is no substitute for fully lifting it. The population in Gaza should not have to survive on international assistance or be forced to live amid ruble. The ongoing tensions all too often demonstrate that the collective suffering imposed on Gaza's entire population, apart from being unacceptable, plays a questionable role as part of an effective security strategy. We therefore insist that freedom of movement for people and goods can and should be ensured, while taking into account Israel's legitimate security concerns.

Also unacceptable is the launching of rockets and mortars into southern Israel by militants in Gaza. They tend to trigger corresponding Israeli reprisals, in the form of air strikes and punitive incursions, thus perpetuating a cycle of violence and suffering. We continue to condemn all violence and provocation by anyone.

Before concluding, let me add a few words on Lebanon. We are following closely the situation in that

country. We all realize the importance of Lebanon to peace and stability in the Middle East. The international community must come together in support of dialogue and foster the spirit of reconciliation and justice. We urge all political groups in Lebanon to maintain calm, address their differences through dialogue and political negotiations and abide by relevant resolutions of the Security Council. It is time to show their commitment to a viable future as a nation, as well as to the right of their people to live in peace and prosperity.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): Like others have done, I too would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing, as well as the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his contribution to today's debate.

The situation in the Middle East remains unstable and very fragile. The protracted lack of progress on almost every front is disconcerting, to say the least. As has so often been stated in the Chamber, time is of the essence.

The conflict has continued for more than 60 years. With the increasing problems faced by the region, the sense of urgency has never been so acute. We need strong political motivation and a spirit of compromise from all sides, as well as the robust involvement of the international community and its main players to ensure the conditions and support necessary for political solutions that will bring about peace, stability, security and economic and social progress to all parties in the region.

Portugal is deeply concerned about the situation and, as a member of the European Union (EU), shares the position that will be expressed by the EU's representative during this debate.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory remains one of great concern, as does the impasse on any serious and fruitful negotiations. We support United States commitments and efforts to relaunch a credible peace process that brings the parties to direct negotiations. But we must recognize that an agreement on all final status issues remains elusive. We know what the basic ingredients for such an agreement are, as well as the core issues that have to be negotiated. What is lacking is the political will to address them.

On the other hand, developments on the ground continue to seriously undermine confidence in the process, to thwart attempts at moving negotiations forward and to erode the prerequisites of the two-State solution, advocated not only by the international community but by the parties themselves.

Building on occupied territory proceeds unabated, as do demolitions and evictions, in violation of international law and undermining the viability of the Palestinian State. The recent partial demolition of the Shepherd Hotel and the extension of Gilo are particularly worrying in this context. Portugal deeply regrets Israel's decision not to extend the moratorium, as requested by the international community, as well as the resumption of settlement activity as soon as the moratorium ended.

It is in that context that we must look at the draft resolution submitted yesterday by Lebanon, with the wide support of the Members of the United Nations. Indeed settlements, including in East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and are an obstacle to peace. We therefore once again call upon the Government of Israel to reconsider its decision and to abide by its international obligations and its commitments under the Road Map, including dismantling all outposts erected since March 2001. I recall that the Fourth Geneva Convention applies to the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Portugal condemns all actions that undermine trust and opposes all unilateral actions that prejudge the outcome of negotiations on permanent status issues, including Jerusalem, which is called to be the capital of two States. We recall that the annexation of East Jerusalem is not recognized by the international community.

Notwithstanding the easing of movement in certain areas, of which we take positive note, many obstacles continue to restrict or impede free movement and access throughout the West Bank. In addition to the difficulties they impose on daily life and the unwarranted humiliations they often entail, they also hamper the economic development of the West Bank.

Portugal also unequivocally condemns the indiscriminate firing of mortars and rockets by extremist groups in Gaza against civilian populations in Israel, in direct contravention of international law, and calls for their immediate halt. We are deeply concerned about the escalation of these terrorist attacks during the past month.

We also note with concern, and condemn, the continued captivity of Staff Sergeant Shalit. We call for his release. It is unacceptable that he continues to be detained and denied humanitarian access. Portugal fully supports the ongoing efforts to secure his peaceful release.

Portugal takes note of some progress in the situation in Gaza. The measures undertaken by Israel are a step in the right direction. However, much more needs to be done to enable the full economic recovery of the Gaza strip, ensure the reconstruction of homes, infrastructure and businesses and meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza. Exports, which are a key component of Gaza's recovery, remain limited to a few shipments of agricultural goods. Portugal therefore calls upon Israel to allow the immediate and sustained opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009).

For the past 60 years, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has played, and continues to play, an essential role in lessening the suffering of Palestinian refugees. Portugal fully supports UNRWA and greatly appreciates the dedication and commitment of its staff, who work in circumstances that are most challenging.

Palestinian reconciliation is another issue that sadly remains at an impasse. We commend and fully support Egypt's tireless efforts in this regard and call upon our Arab partners and other parties in the region to contribute positively to these endeavours.

Prime Minister Fayyad and his Government are progressing steadily in preparing Palestinian institutions for Statehood. We commend them for their efforts and results. We recall the World Bank's recent assessment of the Palestinian Authority's current performance in institution-building and delivery of public services.

But achievements on the institution-building track need to be consolidated with solid advances on the negotiation track if Palestinians are to continue to have faith in the peaceful pursuit of their Statehood. We therefore call upon Palestinian and Israeli leaders to respond positively to efforts seeking the resumption of meaningful negotiations on all core issues. We encourage them to engage actively and constructively in such an endeavour. The time has come for them to show leadership, vision and courage.

As I said, the general outlines of a final negotiated solution are well known. The relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including land for peace, the Road Map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative remain the basis of such a settlement.

None of us can afford another missed opportunity, adding to the list that goes from Oslo to Annapolis, through Camp David and Taba. We urge the parties not to waste any more time and encourage them to build upon past negotiations during which a number of concrete final status proposals were discussed.

The international community must remain committed to assisting the parties in proceeding with the bold and difficult decisions that await them. Portugal looks forward to the active involvement of the Quartet and to a fruitful and forward-looking discussion at its next meeting, bearing mind the 12-month period it set to reach a framework agreement.

Twenty years after Madrid, the peace we all envision for the Middle East is a lasting and comprehensive one that leads to the creation of a viable Palestinian State and to the full integration of Israel in its regional environment, along the lines set out in the Arab Peace Initiative. Portugal therefore supports close cooperation between the Quartet and its Arab partners. It is time for the international community to fully assume its responsibilities.

Allow me two words on the situation in Lebanon. Recent developments in that country have once again brought to the fore fears of renewed instability. The Secretary-General has rightly emphasized the importance of maintaining calm. Stability in Lebanon is crucial to the whole of the region. We call upon all Lebanese political forces to refrain from actions that may escalate tensions and to seek a negotiated political solution to the current situation.

We further reiterate our full support for the work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, established at the request of the Government of Lebanon with a clear mandate from the Security Council. Its work proceeds in accordance with the legal principles and standards applied by all international tribunals.

Portugal also reiterates its commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty and independence. We fully support the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, in which we participate, and the active role it plays in ensuring the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and maintaining the calm along the Blue Line. We call upon all parties to put an end to all violations of that resolution.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his statement, to which we listened very carefully.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be difficult. The much-awaited resumption of talks in September 2010 between Israel and Palestine lasted only a few meetings. Since then, there has been considerable erosion in mutual confidence between the two parties, thereby undermining the peace process.

The events of the past few months have been discouraging, with stalled talks, the resumption of settlement activity and human suffering in Gaza. On the positive side, in spite of the difficult situation in Gaza, the economy there grew by 8 per cent in 2010. The World Bank reported that, if the Palestinian Authority maintains its current performance in institution-building and public services, it will be well positioned for the establishment of a State. Also, there were fewer violent incidents in the 2010 than in previous years.

Unless broken, the current impasse has the potential of having a serious impact on the lives of the people, potentially contributing more fuel to an already combustible situation in the region. This should therefore strengthen our resolve in seeking to achieve a breakthrough in the current impasse so that both parties return to talks.

India has a long-standing tradition of solidarity with the Palestinian people. It was expressed recently by our Prime Minister in his message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Prime Minister reiterated India's unwavering support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet Road Map and relevant Security Council resolutions. Also, India has long contributed to the capacity- and institution-building of the Palestinian people with its material and technical assistance programmes.

In this connection, I would also like to mention, as did my colleagues from Brazil and South Africa, the projects in which India has engaged with those countries through the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Forum. From the resources allocated from the IBSA Trust Fund, we are undertaking the partial reconstruction of the Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza and the construction of an indoor multi-purpose sports complex in Ramallah. We believe that such projects will be of some value to the Palestinian people in improving their health and recreational facilities.

We feel that genuine peace in the region requires a resolution of other issues on the remaining tracks of the Middle East peace process, including the restoration of other Arab lands that remain under occupation. Progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks of the peace process are therefore critical for achieving comprehensive and durable peace in the region.

We are closely monitoring the situation in Lebanon, which is deeply worrying. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon must be allowed to complete its work. We call on all sides to resolve their differences and maintain peace.

While that has been stated several times before, and in many eloquent ways, this central truth bears repetition: a just, fair, durable and credible solution to this vexed problem can only come from meaningful, sincere and results-oriented dialogue, a dialogue that is essentially forward looking. For this, it is important that the ongoing settlement activities by Israel cease forthwith. I would also add that the settlements in the occupied territories are illegal under international law. We remain convinced that lasting peace in the region will contribute to global stability and prosperity.

It is therefore critical for the international community to work closely with the parties with a view to encouraging them to resume direct negotiations. We are hopeful that the talks and negotiations will soon resume, leading to a comprehensive peace process for a final resolution of the conflict.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his update on recent developments in the Middle East. We also thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his presence and for his contribution to our debate.

Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterates that a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East can be achieved only on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Road Map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is and will remain committed to the two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

We do not recognize the annexation of East Jerusalem and underline that the status of Jerusalem is a permanent status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties. Jerusalem, the holy city of the three great monotheistic religions — Christianity, Judaism and Islam — should be the symbol of peace, freedom of religious expression and human rights. In that regard, we express our grave concern at the prolonged and dangerous impasse in the Middle East peace process, which has been aggravated by the most recent incidents on the ground.

We must underline once again that all settlement activities on occupied land are illegal under international law and contrary to Israel's obligations under the Road Map. We also condemn the destruction of the Shepherd Hotel and the planned construction of new illegal settlements. These activities represent an obstacle on the road to comprehensive peace. We therefore call upon Israel to end all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

With regard to Gaza, we note the increased flow of food and consumer goods into Gaza. However, we continue to call for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009). Israel's security concerns, including those of a complete stop to all violence and arms smuggling into Gaza, must also be addressed.

We strongly condemn recent armed attacks on civilians and wish to underline that civilian populations must be protected. Therefore, we reiterate our call for an immediate end to all violence and urge all parties to exercise restraint and make every effort to avoid further escalation.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our strong belief that the functioning of the national unity Government in Lebanon is the best guarantee of preserving stability and promoting dialogue in the country. Hence, it is essential at this critical juncture that Lebanese leaders do their utmost to prevent a political crisis and find a negotiated solution to the current situation.

As a matter of principle, we fully support the work and independence of international criminal courts and tribunals, including the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. Moreover, we reiterate our call on all parties not to interfere in the Tribunal's work and not to prejudge its outcome.

In conclusion, we would like to once again emphasize our concerns at the current stalemate in the peace process, which certainly cannot bring about the positive environment necessary for long-term strategic decision-making and lasting peace. At this critical juncture, it is of utmost importance that the Israelis and the Palestinians alike make the necessary decisions to break the current impasse and return to direct talks as the only way to secure a better future for their peoples.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I have the pleasure to address the Security Council today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I would like to start by expressing the Movement's appreciation for the briefing given today by Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that the international community needs to work collectively and expeditiously in order to uphold its long-standing commitment to establishing an independent and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, by comprehensively and successfully addressing the six core final status issues.

It is regrettable that all serious and credible efforts exerted by international and regional parties, including the Quartet, to ensure the continuity of direct negotiations on the Palestinian track have failed. This is due to the fact that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to pursue its illegal settlement activities, along with many other policies and practices that have undermined all efforts to resume and advance the peace negotiations to attain the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

The demolition by Israeli bulldozers of the historic Shepherd Hotel in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem on 9 January, carried out in order to build a new settlement of 20 units in the heart of the city, is yet another clear sign of Israel's persistence in continuing its settlement policies, which endanger the peace process.

At the same time, the international community has continued to witness the issuing of additional home-demolition orders in occupied East Jerusalem, the establishment of thousands of settlement units at an unprecedented pace since Israel failed to renew the so-called unilateral freeze on settlement activities at the end of September 2010, and the revocation of residency rights of yet more Palestinian Jerusalemites, including elected Palestinian Legislative Council representatives. These are clear signs of Israel's continuation of its unlawful attempts to alter the geographic and demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular East Jerusalem, which remains and will continue to remain rejected and unrecognized by the international community.

It is abundantly clear that the statements of condemnation by the international community have not deterred Israel from its blatant defiance of international legitimacy. The Non-Aligned Movement therefore reiterates its call on the Security Council to be resolute in demanding that Israel exercise the necessary political will to achieve peace, including by respecting all terms of reference of the peace process and abiding by its legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. Israel must completely freeze all settlement activities and fully respect the international consensus on that issue, including the calls from NAM, the United Nations, the European Union, the Quartet and almost all international and regional bodies and actors.

The Non-Aligned Movement also strongly condemns the continued imprisonment of nearly 10,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails and other detention facilities, where ill-treatment and torture are widely used. The Movement commends international efforts to shed light on that issue, including through the convening by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People of the upcoming United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, to be held on 7 and 8 February in Cairo on the specific theme "The urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities". It is the conviction of the members of the Movement that those prisoners, who include children and women, should be immediately released and that proper international inspections of their current condition should be a priority for the Security Council, human rights organs and the international community at large.

The situation in the Gaza Strip also remains among the Non-Aligned Movement's top priorities. The Movement reiterates that the unacceptable and unsustainable situation of Gaza has to come to an end. This unresolved crisis continues to have serious repercussions on the universal efforts to promote peace and continues to inflict deep suffering on the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza. The Non-Aligned Movement emphasizes the need to compel Israel to lift fully its illegal blockade, in accordance with its obligations under international law, international humanitarian law, human rights laws, Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), General Assembly resolution ES-10/18 and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

Furthermore, the Movement emphasizes the urgent need for the reconstruction of Gaza and calls on Israel to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people by opening all of its crossing points with Gaza, allowing the import of essential reconstruction materials, including those necessary for the long-overdue reconstruction of United Nations facilities and schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and to allow the free and unconditional movement of people and goods. We reiterate the importance of ending the blockade of Gaza and stress the need to empower UNRWA with all necessary

financial and human support to undertake its mission effectively.

The Non-Aligned Movement stresses that serious and genuine negotiations can be conducted only when Israel completely freezes its illegal settlement activities in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. Israel's continuous expansion of settlement activities constitutes a serious violation of all its international obligations and destroys the mutual trust and confidence critical to final status negotiations. The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its demand that Israel immediately cease all settlement activities and stop all actions that may prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations.

There is unanimous conviction that it is imperative that Israel respect its obligations if direct negotiations are to be resumed towards achieving the two-State solution on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2009) and 1850 (2008); the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace; the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. The international community must exert all efforts needed in order to stop all settlement activities immediately and start final status negotiations to establish an independent and viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The massive number of Non-Aligned Movement sponsors of the draft resolution officially submitted by Lebanon to the Security Council calling for the immediate cessation of all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, as outlined in the letter dated 18 January 2011 addressed by the Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement to the President of the Security Council, is a clear reflection of the international support for the draft resolution and for the positive effect of its adoption by the Security Council in advancing the cause of peace in the Middle East. The Non-Aligned Movement therefore hopes that the Security Council will unanimously adopt this draft resolution soon.

Turning now to Lebanon, NAM condemns Israel's ongoing violations of Lebanese sovereignty and the recurrence of serious breaches to resolution 1701 (2006). The Movement calls on the concerned parties to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006) in order to end the current fragility and avoid the recurrence of hostilities.

Concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken or that will be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as the Israeli measures to impose jurisdiction and administration there, are null, void and have no legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In my national capacity, let me express Egypt's since appreciation for the expressions of support to the countries of the Middle East and the generous call we heard today for the provision of help to countries in our region in their efforts to combat terrorism. Terrorism is the correct characterization of the deplorable incidents that recently struck our country and others in the region.

However, I would like to stress here that such terrorist attacks are not limited only to the Middle East and do not distinguish between majorities and minorities; they are directed against the entire unity and fabric of the societies they target, including in my country. Therefore, while we appreciate the positive remarks made at the time about the rich cultural and human nature of civilization in the Middle East, our region totally rejects any characterization of these latest incidents as attacks against minorities, as Arab societies are, on the whole, based on the values of unity, coexistence and tolerance, and prize the diversity of our societies to achieve a better future for our peoples. This is the spirit of the resolution adopted today in the League of Arab States at the summit level.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We trust that your expertise and wisdom will guarantee the success of the Council's work this month.

We would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Ms. Susan Rice, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, for her effective management of the work of the Security Council last month.

(*spoke in English*)

In its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004 relating to the *Legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory* (see A/ES-10/273) the International Court of Justice recalled, in paragraphs 74 to 76, the position of the Security Council in respect of the city of Jerusalem. The Court noted specifically in paragraph 75 how the Council, in resolution 298 (1967), advanced

> "all legislative and administrative actions taken by Israel to change the status of the City of Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and properties, transfer of populations and legislation aimed at the incorporation of the occupied section, are totally invalid and cannot change that status".

The actions undertaken by Ateret Cohanim last week in demolishing the Shepherd Hotel cannot therefore, as much as Ateret Cohanim may seek otherwise, change the legal status of East Jerusalem as occupied territory or, to put it more succinctly, cannot turn it from territory that is not Israeli into territory that is. However strenuously it may justify its actions in supporting the settler agenda, the Israeli Government is virtually alone in the world in recognizing these actions by Ateret Cohanim and other groups, like El Ad, to be lawful under, it would have us believe, a combination of Israeli military and administrative law.

And yet the applicable law in respect of the exercise by Israel of military control over the occupied Palestinian territory is clear: it is not Israeli law that reigns supreme there, but international humanitarian law applicable to all high contracting parties as well as obligations that are ergo omnis. Israel's administrative and military regulations insofar as the West Bank is concerned must therefore be utterly consistent with the Fourth Geneva Convention, and its control guided strictly by its obligations as the occupying Power.

The position of the International Court of Justice on this very last point is unambiguous. It maintained in paragraph 78 of its 2004 opinion that

> "The territories situated between the Green Line ... and the former eastern boundary of Palestine under the Mandate were occupied by Israel in 1967 during the armed conflict between Israel and Jordan. Under customary international law, these were therefore occupied territories in which Israel had the status of occupying Power. Subsequent events in these territories ... have done nothing to alter this situation. All these territories (including East Jerusalem) remain occupied territories and Israel has continued to have the status of occupying Power."

It also merits noting that there are no territorial exceptions to this finding: all of the territory of the West Bank, as described by the Court, is considered occupied. A closer reading of resolution 242 (1967) also bears this point out, as we explained before the Court on 24 February 2004. In his oral submission, the late Sir Arthur Watts Q.C., counsel for Jordan, noted how resolution 242 (1967) "affirmed unanimously the principle of Israel's withdrawal of its armed forces from the territories occupied in the recent conflict". That meant, and could only mean, territories on the non-Israeli side of the Green Line.

Thus the Green Line is the starting line from which is measured the extent of Israel's occupation of non-Israeli territory. Having originated in 1949 as an armistice line, it became in 1967 the line to the Israeli side of which Israel had to withdraw its forces and on the non-Israeli side of which territory was occupied by Israel. It is also perhaps worth recalling that in negotiating what became resolution 242 (1967), the principle interlocutors reached the understanding that there would be a withdrawal from all non-Israeli territory, with only minor reciprocal border rectifications.

For decades, Israel has been settling on territory that does not belong to it, against the wishes of the Palestinian people, to whom the territory does belong and who yearn for their freedom. While it is now readily accepted, the settlement policy can only be undone through a negotiated agreement between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government. For the latter to offer to hold talks with the Palestinian President while simultaneously allowing groups like El Ad and Ateret Cohanim to continue their usurpation of Palestinian lands under the veil of Israeli law, the very imposition of which is ultra vires, is contemptible and not becoming of a people who themselves have historically suffered greatly at the hands of others.

That settlement building has continued unabated over many years is true, notwithstanding the rising chorus of indignation on the part of the international community towards it. Yet there was hope that comprehensive peace could be secured before it was

foreclosed altogether by the growth in the number of settlements. That hope is being extinguished fast. Why? Because even if its legal status cannot be changed, so near are we to seeing East Jerusalem sealed off from the rest of the West Bank, from the cumulative effect of both the separation wall and the actions of the settler movement — all supported by the Israeli Government — it will shortly simply not be believable to us that any future Israeli Government could reverse it.

For even if there were to be a peace deal struck between Israel and the Palestinian Authority requiring Israel to cede East Jerusalem, will there be an Israeli Government willing to implement such a deal and be prepared to go to war with its settler community over the latter's increasingly entrenched position in East Jerusalem, no matter what other occupied territories Israel has withdrawn from in the past? And if there were to be no negotiated settlement over Jerusalem because the settler organizations will have rendered the point moot through their actions, then the peace we all desire — a comprehensive, just and durable peace — will have been murdered by an avoidable circumstance; and Israel will be alone to chart an impossible course for itself in de facto control over an Arab population soon to be in the majority.

If those individuals on the right in Israel believe in more noxious measures for addressing the reality soon to be staring them in the face, the international community, specifically the International Criminal Court, will possibly have a say in the matter too.

The actions of the settler movement in the occupied Palestinian territory must therefore be stopped. And the deep suffering of the Palestinian people must be brought to an end through the establishment of their own State on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

When the Security Council held its first meeting on 17 January 1946, the very horrors of the Second World War, including the Holocaust, were freshly in the mind of its members. If there was one objective it had to fulfil in the future, it was to preclude the recurrence of the sort of wars that left much of the world in ruin twice in the twentieth century. Sixty-five years and two days later, that objective remains as relevant as ever. The Council must therefore show itself strong enough to diffuse and overcome those spinning winds that, through their centrifugal forces, will draw countries — indeed whole regions — into a single colossus of an emergency quite beyond anything we see today. A single violent shock in the heart of Jerusalem could, for example, achieve this on its own. For the Council to simply wait for it to occur is hardly adequate preparation for what gigantic consequences will surely flow from such a transformational event.

The Israelis will occasionally say to us that resolving the conflict is less a matter of law than psychology. Given the rhythms and the very real traumas of Jewish historical experience, they are cautious about placing their trust in anybody, let alone, they say, in us, the Arabs. Perhaps we must concede that we could have done more to better understand this point — done more to develop greater trust by, inter alia, better explaining the terms of the Arab Peace Initiative to the Israeli public.

On the other hand, the actions of States must also be guided by the rules, which the Council itself must uphold. Our deep opposition to the policy of settlement building and our repeated strong condemnation of it, which we reiterate today, is not founded on some form of primordial enmity or bigotry towards the Jewish people. Any assertion to that effect is itself thoroughly distasteful to us. What it is built on is the continuing three-decade-long violation of international humanitarian law, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice. In paragraph 120 of its 2004 advisory opinion (see A/ES-10/273), the International Court of Justice held that,

> "As regards these settlements, the Court notes that Article 49, paragraph 6, of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides: 'The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.' That provision prohibits not only deportations or forced transfers of population such as those carried out during the Second World War, but also any measures taken by an occupying Power in order to organize or encourage transfers of parts of its own population into the occupied territory. In this respect, the information provided to the Court shows that, since 1977, Israel has conducted a policy and developed practices involving the establishment of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, contrary to the terms of Article 49, paragraph 6, just cited."

The Court continued:

"The Security Council has thus taken the view that such policy and practices 'have no legal validity'. It has also called upon 'Israel, as the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously' by the Fourth Geneva Convention and: 'to rescind its previous measures and to desist from taking any action which would result in changing the legal status and geographical nature and materially affecting the demographic composition of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem and, in particular, not to transfer parts of its own civilian population into the occupied Arab territories' (resolution 446 (1979) of 22 March 1979)."

The Court went on to remind us that the Council reaffirmed its position in resolutions 452 (1979) and 465 (1980). The Court concludes that

> "the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) have been established in breach of international law."

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 2.30 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6470 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6470th meeting

Wednesday, 19 January 2011, 2.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Čolaković	(Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Members:	Brazil	Mr. Rizzo
	China	Mr. Huang Hongjiang
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Ms. Legendre
	Gabon	Mrs. Ntyam-Ehya
	Germany	Mr. Eick
	India	Mr. Gupta
	Lebanon	Mr. Ramadan
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Portugal	Mr. Vaz Patto
	Russian Federation	Mr. Listov
	South Africa	Mr. Crowley
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Afshar
	United States of America	Ms. Masilko

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting resumed at 2.40 p.m.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Security Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, recently voiced his concern over the murder of four Palestinian citizens by the Israeli Defense Forces in the West Bank and the demolition of the historic Hotel Shepherd in the centre of Jerusalem to make way for an Israeli settlement. The West Bank Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Barbara Shenstone, indicated that the demolitions of dwellings of Palestinian citizens occupied since prior to 1948 are reprehensible acts of devastating effect and violate Israeli obligations pursuant to international law and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These facts continue to occur without this body adopting efficient measures to avoid such excesses. Therefore, it is imperative to reiterate that all activities connected with the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of peace in the region.

These and other reprehensible actions repeatedly carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, which are aimed at changing the demographic composition, character and status of Palestinian territories, in clear violation of international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of this body and of the United Nations, require the international community to demand the immediate cessation of such illegal activities.

Against this backdrop, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela co-sponsors and therefore firmly supports the draft resolution urging Israel to cease the construction of settlements. The United Nations must condemn in the firmest possible manner these repeated violations of international law carried out by the State of Israel and adopt practical and effective measures to prevent them, at the risk of its historic relevance.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes the increasing number of countries, in particular those of Latin America and the Caribbean, that have joined the dozens of countries throughout the world recognizing Palestine as a free and independent State. The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to recall the importance of ensuring the implementation of all Security Council and other United Nations resolutions promoting a peaceful solution that will lead to the establishment of two States. The Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map are equally relevant proposals that urge direct negotiations between the parties so that the State of Israel and the State of Palestine can live side by side within secure and recognized borders.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms the need to implement the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War in the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the other Arab territories occupied since 1967.

Our country emphasizes the importance of the annual international United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, to be held on 7 and 8 February in Cairo on the theme "The urgency of addressing the plight of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention facilities". This praiseworthy initiative, supported by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, will offer the opportunity to address the repeated violations of human rights suffered by hundreds of men and women who heroically and with dignity have fought for the just, legal and heroic cause of their people.

We cannot fail to mention the delicate humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The daily suffering of Palestinians in this territory requires us to demand once again the immediate lifting of the merciless blockade imposed by the Government of the State of Israel.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela once again calls on the State of Israel to respect the sovereignty of Lebanon so that situations such those of July 2006 may avoid recurrence. In that respect, efforts to promote direct negotiations between the parties must be encouraged, pursuant to resolution 1701 (2006).

All illegal actions aimed at violating the territorial area of the occupied Syrian Golan are also an

impediment to comprehensive peace in the region. Hence, Member States must address the need for Israel to withdraw pursuant to the demands of resolution 498 (1981). Moreover, resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) must be implemented in order to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria and thereby contribute to the peace that is so sorely needed throughout the region.

I would conclude by stating that cruelty, injustice and unfairness throughout the world can constitute major obstacles to the implementation of the provisions of international law. That is why we once again call on the State of Israel to comply with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations on the Middle East and the question of Palestine. We very much hope that today's debate of the Security Council will contribute to achieving the longed-for peace in that region of the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Let me begin by congratulating you, Madame President, on Bosnia and Herzegovina's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and by extending the appreciation of my delegation to you and the members of the Council for convening this open debate on such an important issue.

My delegation joins others in congratulating the five new members of the Council — Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa — and in wishing them a very productive and successful tenure in the Council. We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and with the statement of the Organization of Islamic Conference to be delivered by the representative of Tajikistan.

In the past few weeks, the news emanating from the region has been of grave concern. The acceleration of settlement construction and expansion in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, epitomizes this harrowing trend. The situation was made even worse by the latest military incursion conducted by Israel a few days ago. The international community is very aware of the ultimate objective of these settlement policies and measures. They are clearly aimed at altering the demographic composition, physical character and status of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel is violating international law and the United Nations Charter.

The illegal Israeli settlements undermine all efforts to restart peace talks between Palestine and Israel, jeopardizing the vision of a two-State solution and complicating the conflict in the region. We therefore attach primary importance to the role of the Security Council in responding to the settlement issue as it did back in 1980, when it adopted resolution 465 (1980). The Council must regain its role in solving this very important issue, as mandated by the United Nations Charter.

It is in this context that Indonesia is co-sponsoring the draft resolution before the Council on the illegal Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We hope that this new resolution will reverse the inactivity of the Security Council when it comes to matters relating to the suffering of the Palestinian people. The Council must and indeed can exert a positive influence on the Middle East peace process.

At this stage, however, it is hard to imagine that peace can be victorious in the Middle East through a one-time lofty solution. We can always hope for the kind of effort made at Oslo or Madrid or Annapolis, but for the time being we must appreciate positive developments on any scale that keep the peace process in motion. Indonesia therefore supports the current surge in diplomacy aimed at relaunching negotiations and jump-starting a comprehensive peace process, including the ongoing efforts of the United States. We also recognize the role of the Quartet in promoting solutions to the conflict in the Middle East. And, not least, we have been persistent in recognizing the contribution of countries in the region and of the League of Arab States to the Middle East peace process, including through the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is our view that the peace process and the peace settlement must be aligned. One cannot envisage a peace settlement forced under the threat of the barrel of a gun. That would produce only a short-lived settlement, if not a hazardous one. Nor can one imagine a peace process that lacks the legitimacy conferred by the main parties and the international community.

For far too long the Middle East conflict has tarnished the efforts of our era to create a peaceful and liveable region. The need to find a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive settlement to the conflict is absolutely critical. The Government of Indonesia is committed to helping to achieve an end to the protracted and bitter conflict that has been wearing on the parties of the region for far too long. Our commitment to and support for the Palestinian cause is total and unwavering. Our commitment to an independent, viable and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with its neighbours, is absolute.

Let me conclude by expressing our fervent hope, which, I believe, is also shared by many here and outside this Chamber. The Palestinian comprehensive plan was launched in August 2009 in preparation for independence within a 24-month period. We hope that 2011 will be the year that history will record as seeing the victory of reason over fear, the victory of humanity over cruelty; the year enabling us to liberate the people of Palestine and to bestow peace and prosperity on them, the year to see two countries living side by side, charting a new phase in their bilateral relationship. The Security Council owes the international community and those two peoples such a desirable and dignified outcome.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour to address the Security Council today in the debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I thank the presidency for convening an open debate on this matter, which has been the focus of attention and concern on the part of the international community for decades. I also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, for his briefing.

Chile associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

My country has consistently supported the right of the Palestinian people to form an independent State coexisting in peace with the State of Israel. Similarly, we have fully supported the right of the State of Israel to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders. In order to achieve those aims, the Government of Chile considers imperative and resolutely supports the relaunching of the negotiation process between the two parties, with the support of the international community, in order to achieve a comprehensive, definitive and satisfactory peace agreement in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations.

The continuation of the Israeli Government's policy of settlement construction is a serious obstacle to this process, and we call for its immediate suspension, as stated in the draft resolution submitted to the Council, of which my delegation is a sponsor.

The Government of Chile, on the seventh of this month, recognized the existence of Palestine as a free, independent and sovereign State. In that recognition, the Government of Chile made particular mention of the Jewish and Palestinian communities in Chile because of their valuable support for the country's social, cultural, political and economic development over many decades, and for their full integration into our society. Their fraternal coexistence has been a clear example of good relations, which we hope will serve as an inspiration to the States of Israel and Palestine, a point that I reiterate that today in this Chamber.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba supports the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

It is regrettable that the situation in the region, particularly the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, is continuing without progress being made. The region is still marked by instability and insecurity. The situation in the Gaza Strip is unsustainable. The blockade of the Strip — the imposition by Israel of impediments and restrictions on the freedom of movement and access to both persons and goods, including humanitarian and medical supplies — has made the recovery and reconstruction of the area practically impossible, a situation that has further affected the already precarious living standards of the population.

The international community cannot remain indifferent. All possible practical measures must be taken to ensure that Israel ends those policies, which are carried out deliberately and in violation of international laws. Such policies only increase the suffering and tensions of the Palestinian people. Cuba

reiterates its demand that Israel immediately, unconditionally and fully lift the cruel and illegal blockade in Gaza and allow the free movement of supplies to and from the Gaza Strip, as well as permanent humanitarian access to it.

Cuba condemns the settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, which are continuing despite the calls by the international community for an immediate halt to them. Recently, the Government of Israel, in flagrant violation of the norms of international law, destroyed the historic Shepherd Hotel, located in the occupied territory of East Jerusalem, to establish a new Israeli settlement. Israel also announced that in 2012 it will allocate $500 million for subsidies for settlement activities.

At the end of 2009, more than 3,700 dwellings were being built and more than 200 Palestinian dwellings were demolished to make way for those illegal activities. Cuba demands an immediate halt to the demolition of Palestinian dwellings, the construction of the wall and the eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, as well as other acts of provocation and illegal aggression perpetrated by the extremist settlers against the Palestinian population and the holy sites. These measures and policies perpetuated by Israel are serious and flagrant violations of international law, the United Nations Charter, many resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004.

The Security Council cannot remain indifferent to these facts. Its silence over the past two years on this matter has been used by Israel to pursue its demolitions and construction of settlements. Direct conversations between Israel and Palestine, upon which the international community pinned certain hopes, lasted for less than a month, due to Israel's decision to continue its settlement activities and to end the brief moratorium thereon.

The widespread physical, economic and social devastation caused by the illegal and destructive practice of settlements has been the main obstacle to achieving a peace agreement. In practical terms, the settlement policy prevents the creation of a Palestinian State on the basis of the existing 1967 borders, and thus the possibility of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a just manner.

Cuba reaffirms that any measure or action that Israel has taken or will take to change the legal, physical and demographic situation and institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan, or to exercise jurisdiction and administration in that territory is null and void and has no legal effect. We also reaffirm that all such measures and actions, including the illegal construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, are violations of international law and agreements, the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and represent a defiance of the international community. Cuba demands Israel's full withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

Israel cannot be allowed to continue to commit serious and flagrant violations of international law with impunity. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security in the region and, in particular, for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Palestinian people and its leaders have agreed to and are working assiduously for a two-State solution. However, Israel thus far has not proved to be a serious interlocutor in the peace process. The international community must assume its responsibility for the Palestinian question and find a solution that allows the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination. In this connection, it is imperative that a peace agreement be achieved this year, pursuant to relevant resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. The growing international recognition of the Palestinian State that we have seen in recent weeks in Latin America and the Caribbean should give momentum towards achieving this objective.

Cuba once again reiterates its position in favour of a fair and lasting peace for all the peoples of the Middle East that will put an end to the occupation of all the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and guarantee the exercise of self-determination of the Palestinian people by means of the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Mugoya (Uganda): I thank you, Madame President, for organizing today's open debate on the

situation in the Middle East. We thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing, and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his statement.

We welcomed the holding of direct Israeli-Palestinian talks between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas in Washington, D.C., Sharm el-Sheikh and Jerusalem, with a renewed sense of optimism. Both parties committed themselves to negotiating in good faith a framework agreement that would lay the foundation for a final peace treaty. The expectation of the international community was that this momentum would be sustained towards the long-awaited creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside Israel. Uganda is convinced that there is no viable alternative to a negotiated solution and that comprehensive and durable peace lies in a two-State solution.

We urge Israelis and Palestinians alike to summon the necessary courage to engage without delay in substantive negotiations on all core issues, including security, borders, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem. In this regard, we commend the efforts undertaken by the international community and regional partners in facilitating negotiations. There is no doubt that the negotiation process will require courageous decisions and concessions by both parties.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the recent developments that led to the stalling of direct talks. The continued settlement activity of Israel is a recipe for conflict. In this regard, the recent demolition of the Shepherd Hotel and the planned construction of a new settlement are not conducive to negotiations. In our view, such actions constitute an obstacle to peace. We reiterate our call upon Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth.

Uganda salutes the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, for the significant accomplishments towards fulfilling its obligations under the Road Map, particularly in the security sector, institution-building and economic development.

We are also concerned over the situation in Gaza. While we welcome the easing of the blockade, it is evident that it continues to hamper humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts in that area. We therefore call for Israel's complete lifting of the blockade. It is essential that both parties exercise maximum restraint and adhere to the ceasefire, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009) and other relevant resolutions.

On the subject of Lebanon, we are concerned about the continued violations of resolution 1701 (2006), and reiterate our call on all parties to fully implement that resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): I thank you very much, Madame President, for giving us the opportunity to address the situation in the Middle East. I would like to thank Mr. Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine, Ambassador Mansour, for his statement this morning.

Japan hopes that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace will be realized at the earliest date possible. In this context, Japan strongly supports a two-State solution and remains convinced that the only way to achieve durable peace is to achieve the two-State solution through sincere negotiations.

Gravely concerned by the current impasse in the peace process, we strongly encourage both parties to restart direct negotiations. We also believe that there is lack of mutual trust that is preventing this. We call on both sides to engage the United States and the international community and to take steps that will create an environment conducive to renewing direct negotiations.

The two parties must abide by their obligations under previous agreements, most importantly the Road Map. We call on Israel, as we have on so many occasions, to freeze its settlement activities in the West Bank, which includes East Jerusalem. In that connection, Japan condemns the demolishing of a part of Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem with a view to constructing new housing units for Jewish people. Japan does not recognize any unilateral measures that prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations.

At the same time, we call upon the Palestinian Authority to continue its efforts to improve security and fulfill its commitment to cease violence and work against incitement. We strongly condemn the rocket attacks launched into Israel and call on those responsible to immediately stop.

Japan strongly supports and will continue to provide assistance to the State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority.

On the Gaza strip, the measures taken by Israel to ease the blockade are a positive step, but Japan remains concerned about the humanitarian situation. Japan stresses the importance of further easing the blockade while preventing the inflow of weapons into the Gaza Strip. Japan welcomes Israel's easing of restrictions on movement and access in the West Bank, which has contributed to the development of the Palestinian economy, and hopes that Israel will further ease such restrictions.

We call on both parties to make the difficult decisions to advance peace. Japan will continue its efforts to realize a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Allow me to say a few words on Lebanon. We are concerned about the situation in Lebanon, where a number of Cabinet members under Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced their resignation last week. We reaffirm our support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon and for the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. We are closely following the developments in Lebanon and support the efforts of President Michel Sleiman for the early establishment of a new Government and the maintenance of democratic institutions.

We support the Special Tribunal for Lebanon — an independent and international judicial organization whose work will enhance the rule of law. The Tribunal should continue to carry out its mandate without any interference, which will contribute to ending impunity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): Let me first congratulate Bosnia and Herzegovina for assuming the presidency of the Security Council.

The Council is once again deliberating on the situation in the Middle East, and once again the outlook is bleak. We are not even remotely close to a negotiated comprehensive settlement, and recent developments in various parts of the region are fuelling uncertainty and instability. The continuing state of flux is not at all conducive to addressing the many intertwined issues facing us in the Middle East. That is why it is crucial to actively and aggressively engage with all actors with a view to putting the relevant process back on track.

Turkey continues to believe that there is no alternative to a negotiated two-State solution. The parameters are well known and remain on the table. We reject violence of any kind perpetrated by any party. We also recognize that an impasse in which one side continuously undermines any and all efforts at even direct talks is not tenable.

At the moment, on the Israeli-Palestinian track there are ongoing talks on whether there can be talks towards addressing core issues. However, slowly but surely, and in blatant disregard for international law or morality, Israel is imposing its will on the Palestinians, through accelerated and aggressive settlement activity, tightening measures of occupation, demolitions and evictions.

The latest developments in East Jerusalem are deplorable. How can the Palestinian side be expected to negotiate in good faith while Israel continues to advocate and implement such unilateral policies? That is the major dilemma at the moment, and that is why it is high time for the Security Council to make a strong statement on such unilateral Israeli practices. The Council must not shy away from that responsibility.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian side cannot be expected to remain a prisoner of Israel's will forever. Indeed, with the ongoing help of the international community, the Palestinians are successfully building their national institutions, and at the current pace and performance they are well positioned for the establishment of their State at any point in the near future. That process cannot be reversed, as evidenced by the recent increase in the number of States that recognize Palestine. Based on the will of the international community, that process will ultimately culminate in the creation of the State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders.

On the other hand, it has been two years since Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) was adopted. The sad truth is that since then there has been no significant change on the ground. Despite all the public diplomacy to the contrary, the circumstances of the 1.5 million prisoners in Gaza remain appalling. An unjust, inhumane and unlawful blockade continues to be imposed from land and sea. Homes, schools and basic infrastructure cannot be built. Markets are full of

goods no one can afford. Indeed, resolution 1860 (2009), which called for the unimpeded provision of humanitarian aid and the elevation of the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza, has become, for all intents and purposes, meaningless. The plight of the Palestinians of Gaza is an embarrassment for the international community.

Meanwhile, an international humanitarian aid convoy attempting to deliver much-needed material to Gaza was attacked by Israel in international waters more than six months ago. A panel of inquiry was established to investigate that incident, with the participation of Israel. However, it is January 2011, and Israel has yet to submit its report.

Turkey is concerned about the recent turn of events in Lebanon. We fully support Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. The democratic process, the rule of law and constitutional order must not be undermined. Achieving lasting national reconciliation is in the interest of all Lebanese people and factions. Turkey will continue to actively promote and support all efforts to foster peaceful political dialogue in Lebanon and the region.

The President: I call next on the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express my delegation's appreciation to you, Madam President, for organizing this open debate under the frustrating and precarious circumstances that prevail in the occupied Palestinian territories, which are felt in the whole region, especially under the daily practices of the Israeli Government and its evasion of negotiations. We also wish to express our thanks and appreciation to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his comprehensive briefing.

In addition to the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and those to be delivered by Tajikistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and by Tunisia on behalf of the Arab Group, my delegation wishes to focus its statement on the serious circumstances and the grave results of the increased pace of Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in East Jerusalem, and the obstacles it continues to place in the road to peace negotiations, as the entire international community has agreed on.

We wish to stress that it is important to maintain the momentum that resulted following the resumption of direct talks in Washington, D. C. on 2 September 2010 under the auspices of the United States of America, when the Palestinian side, backed by undivided Arab support, stated its readiness to continue along the path towards peace and stability, as reflected in the American and other international parties' efforts. We wish to express our appreciation to President Obama for his efforts to relaunch a genuine peace process, including the commitments that he mentioned in his statement before the General Assembly on 23 September 2010 with regard to the rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent State within a set timeframe (see A/65/PV.11). We also take this opportunity to express our wish that the American Administration continue its robust efforts, pursuant to the established principles of the peace process, resolutions of international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

Alongside those American and international efforts, the Palestinian leadership has fulfilled all its international commitments under the Road Map. Moreover, it has also taken concrete steps towards establishing the foundations of an independent Palestinian State, for which the Palestinian people yearn, with the support of the international community.

In contrast to that firm Palestinian determination, Israel has continued its unilateral measures by implementing an expedited settlement policy in order to curtail all signs of Palestinian presence on their own land and to undermine the two-State solution, which Israel has repeatedly avowed and committed itself to. Israel is thus fully responsible for stalling the peace process. In the short period since the cessation of direct negotiations, the Israeli Government has continued to seize more land, to build more housing units and to demolish more Palestinian homes and expel its legitimate owners, all the while enacting new legislation limiting the conditions for its withdrawal from East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan.

With regard to the occupied city of Jerusalem and its environs, Israel continues its illegal policy of Judaizing the Holy City through the destruction of its main original features and the recent demolition of a

historic hotel in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem in order to build 20 housing units in the centre of the city. Israel also declared that it will build 1,400 additional housing units for settlers in the southern part of Jerusalem. This will entail the expulsion of Palestinian owners, the demolition of their homes and the cancelling of their residency rights, in clear violation of international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions. That is in addition to provocative measures targeting religious sites and aimed at inflaming religious sensitivities.

The Kingdom of Morocco and His Majesty King Mohammed VI, who is the current Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, set up by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), express their grave concern and condemn all Israeli practices seeking to change the legal status of Jerusalem. The international community and the Security Council are requested to put an end to such practices. The Palestinian side, supported by the League of Arab States, the OIC, the Non-Aligned Movement and other States, opted to come to the Security Council on the matter of Israeli settlements to affirm the illegality of settlement activities and to urge the Council to shoulder its responsibility so as to restore hope in those who chose peaceful negotiations as a civil means to achieve peace. That initiative was based on the belief that peace in the Middle East is not only the concern of the opposing parties and the region itself, but is also a legitimate and immediate requirement of the international community, as the stability of the Middle East has a strong and direct impact on international peace and security.

We wish to send the message that the settlements and the construction of new housing units are rejected and that they impede direct negotiations and undermine all substantive efforts for peace. Based on our resolute choice for peace and our international legitimacy, we wish to reiterate that the two-State solution, which guarantees the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, as well as Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights and the remaining Lebanese lands, remain the only way to end decades of conflict in the Middle East.

In order to reach that ultimate strategic goal, all efforts to continue direct negotiations and to put an end to all unilateral measures by any side should be strengthened in order to create an environment conducive to relaunching negotiations and to avoid extremism and violence and their dire consequences for all the peoples and States of the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): Let me first and foremost congratulate you, Madam President, on your presidency of the Council, and secondly, state that we align my delegation's statement with the statements of the representatives of Egypt, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and Tajikistan, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The continued occupation of Palestinian territory and its ramifications are unacceptable. The build-up of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands, including in East Jerusalem, continues unabated. That includes the recent demolition of the historic Shepherd Hotel in order to make way for the construction of more housing for settlers.

In continuing to do so, Israel has time and again put itself on the wrong side of history, with impunity. In that connection, we welcome the European Union's declaration on the Middle East peace process of 13 December 2010, which considers Israeli settlements, including in East Jerusalem, illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. In addition, we also welcome the increasing number of countries officially recognizing the State of Palestine. At the very least, that development serves as an indication to all Palestinians that the world at large has not forgotten or forsaken them.

It is also a reminder to Israel that it must fulfil its legal obligations by stopping all illegal settlement activities, the construction of the separation wall and the demolition of Palestinian-owned buildings and infrastructure, particularly in East Jerusalem. Only by doing so can the peace process timeline stipulated in September 2010 be adhered to and the occupation end. Only by doing so can we bring stability and peace to the Middle East. Most important of all, we can restore justice and all rights due to the Palestinian people.

On Gaza, we reiterate our call on Israel to lift the blockade and end the imprisonment of more than 1.5 million people, to normalize the flow of construction materials and to expedite further approvals of United Nations projects, including the building of more schools by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near

East. Provocative actions, such as the shooting of Palestinian civilians, including children, by Israeli military personnel, must stop, as such actions further aggravate the already dire situation in the Strip.

Resolving these issues requires the international community to focus all its energy and efforts on achieving a comprehensive peace in the region and on restoring the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to an independent State of Palestine. All parties must act truthfully and sincerely towards achieving these objectives. We again urge the Security Council to take the necessary action by bringing into effect its very own resolutions on Palestine and the Middle East.

The President: I give the floor to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Diallo (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin, Madame, by congratulating you, on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, on the outstanding manner in which the Bosnian presidency has led the Council's work this month. I also wish to commend Ambassador Susan Rice, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, who presided so effectively over the Council's work in December 2010.

I also thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his exhaustive briefing, in which he urged the parties and the international community to pursue their efforts aimed at the resumption of negotiations on all final status issues concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In a statement issued earlier this week, the Bureau of my Committee reaffirmed that the continuation of Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, is the main obstacle to a resumption of negotiations between the parties to the conflict. It again urges the Government of Israel to heed the repeated calls of the international community for a complete cessation of settlement activities, which are illegal under international law and run counter to the efforts to launch successful final status negotiations.

Since the expiration of the partial moratorium in September, Israel has built over 1,600 housing units in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The recent decision of the Government of Israel to devote over $500 million in the form of subsidies to expanding settlements through 2012 also demonstrates Israel's intention to pursue its illegal settlement policies in the occupied Palestinian territories.

It would be useful if the Security Council were to reaffirm today its firm position on settlements and to demand that an end be put to their expansion so that the parties might understand that the United Nations and the Security Council intend to ensure respect for international legitimacy and to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question. The Council must urgently intervene to prevent the situation from deteriorating. It is also obligated to maintain regional peace and security.

In that respect, the Committee fervently hopes that the draft resolution on Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories will be adopted by the Council. Furthermore, the Committee asks the Government of Israel to extend the moratorium indefinitely and to apply it to East Jerusalem, pursuant to its obligations under Road Map. The Committee believes that the implementation of a new moratorium on settlements, including in East Jerusalem, would enable the parties to relaunch serious and direct negotiations. These important negotiations can succeed only in an atmosphere of mutual trust and good faith.

While commending the efforts undertaken by the Quartet and each of its members in recent years to promote a freeze of settlement activities and a resumption of negotiations, the Committee, through me, urges the Council, the Quartet and the high contracting parties to the Geneva Conventions to clearly reaffirm their principled position on the issue of settlements in order to compel Israel to meet its obligations. The very future of the peace process is at stake. The international community should send a clear message that settlement activities are illegal and incompatible with peace. They must therefore stop.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Tajikistan.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the great honour to make this statement on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) group.

At the outset, I wish to thank you, Madame, for having convened this meeting to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I should also like to convey my gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, for his very detailed briefing.

Israel, the occupying Power, has methodically stepped up its violations in the occupied Palestinian territories by confiscating lands, demolishing houses, building illegal settlements, constructing the separation wall, erecting numerous checkpoints, detaining thousands of Palestinians and imposing an unjust blockade on the Gaza. All those illegal acts are being undertaken despite unprecedented international unanimity in calling on Israel to stop such unlawful and unilateral activities, which flagrantly violate The Hague and Geneva Conventions, and the resolutions of the Security Council and UNESCO on East Jerusalem, and defy the united international opinion.

East Jerusalem remains an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. Its illegal annexation by Israel has been rejected and remains unrecognized by the international community. However, Israel, the occupying Power, pursues a systematic process of altering the historical Arab-Islamic identity of the holy city, Judaizing and tampering with its history, and changing its demographic composition. It continues to build the separation wall, confiscate lands, demolish houses, construct new settlement neighbourhoods, and excavate beneath the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. All these activities seek to completely change the facts on the ground, and ultimately to isolate occupied East Jerusalem from its Palestinian surroundings.

Settlement construction, if allowed to continue, will make Jerusalem the capital of hatred, fanaticism and violence instead of the capital of tolerance and coexistence. The choice before Israel, the occupying Power, is clear. If peace and international justice are to prevail, the demolition and colonial settlement policies must stop. In the meanwhile, we reaffirm through this international platform that such illegal Israeli practices will surely undermine diplomatic efforts to restore constructive negotiations, and ultimately squander the historic opportunity to make peace and coexistence a reality. At this critical juncture, the international community must shoulder its responsibilities and put a decisive end to the Israeli policy of settlement-building on Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem. Israel must comply with the will of the international community, abide by the resolutions of international legitimacy and respect the provisions of international law. For all these reasons, Israel must stop building and expanding illegal settlements in order to enhance the prospects for a viable two-State solution.

The OIC remains deeply concerned by Israel's ongoing air and land violations of Lebanon's sovereignty in breach of resolution 1701 (2006), and calls on it to withdraw fully from the remaining Lebanese occupied territories.

The OIC also associates itself with the position of the international community to the effect that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structures, as well as Israel's measures to impose its jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no international legal effect. The OIC demands that Israel abide fully and immediately by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Serrano: I thank you, Madame, for giving the floor to the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union listened carefully to the important statements by Under-Secretary-General Pascoe and the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

The European Union notes with regret that since our last discussion on the situation in the Middle East in October 2010 (see S/PV.6404), the direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians have come to a stop for the moment. Our hopes for the resumption of direct peace talks, expressed in this very place four months ago, did not materialize.

There is no alternative to a negotiated two-State solution. Therefore, the European Union calls on all parties to find a satisfactory way to engage without delay in substantive negotiations on all final status issues. The European Union affirms its readiness to contribute to a negotiated solution on all final status issues within the 12 months set by the Quartet. The European Union is preparing to participate actively in the envisaged Quartet meeting in the coming weeks. Intensified coordination within the Quartet, as well as close cooperation with Arab partners, building on the Arab Peace Initiative, will be instrumental.

In this context, the European Union considers that it is indispensable that both sides show restraint and refrain from actions that could negatively affect the continuation of this process. To that end, both sides must uphold and implement previous commitments and strive to create an environment conducive to a successful outcome of these negotiations.

The European Union reiterates its call on Israel to end all settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem. As stated by EU ministers in December 2010, settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. If there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States. In this context, the EU strongly condemns the latest developments in East Jerusalem, most recently the demolition of the Shepherd Hotel on 9 January and the planned construction of a new illegal settlement. These construction plans should be abandoned.

The European Union High Representative, Catherine Ashton, visited the region once more in the first days of 2011. She has listened carefully to the positions and concerns of both parties and underlined the need for urgent progress towards a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security as part of a just and comprehensive peace. She discussed with the Palestinian Authority the implementation of its State-building plan. This work is of crucial importance for the establishment of the future State of Palestine, and the EU will continue to actively support it. We welcome the World Bank's assessment that:

> "If the Palestinian Authority maintains its current performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well-positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future."

Political and financial support from the entire international community is essential. The European Union urges those who have made financial commitments to deliver on their promises. All efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation behind President Mahmoud Abbas must also be accelerated.

The European Union remains extremely concerned by the prevailing situation in Gaza and firmly reiterates its calls for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), as well as for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, including goods and persons from the West Bank. The EU recognizes the progress following the decision of the Israeli Government of 20 June 2010, but changes on the ground have been limited and insufficient thus far. Further efforts and complementary measures by the Government of Israel are needed to achieve a fundamental change of policy that will allow for the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza and improve the daily lives of the population while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. The European Union has always recognized these concerns, deeply regrets the loss of life and calls for a complete stop of all violence, including rocket attacks, and of arms smuggling into Gaza. The European Union renews its calls on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, in contradiction with all principles of international humanitarian law, to release him without delay.

The European Union welcomes the announcement by the Government of Israel concerning new measures to facilitate exports out of Gaza, an essential component of its recovery. The European Union encourages a swift implementation and is ready to work with Israel and the Palestinian Authority towards reaching pre-2007 levels of exports in 2011 to achieve real change on the ground. Increased and accelerated imports of construction materials are another crucial component of Gaza's recovery.

The European Union highly values the services delivered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide health, education and social protection services.

It also recalls that peace in the Middle East should be comprehensive and reiterates the importance of negotiations on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks. As regards Lebanon, the European

Union has appreciated the Syrian-Saudi efforts to help Lebanon avoid tensions. The European Union reiterates its support for the Lebanese authorities and calls on all political actors to work constructively to seek a negotiated solution to the current situation. Dialogue and stability are essential to responding to recent events in the interest of the Lebanese people.

At the same time, the EU renews its support to the Secretary-General's recent unequivocal statement reaffirming the independence of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, as well as his appeal for calm. The European Union urges all parties not to interfere in the Tribunal's work and not to prejudge its outcome. The European Union takes note that the Prosecutor filed, on Monday, 17 January, an indictment with the Registrar for transmission to the Pre-Trial Judge.

The European Union reaffirms its full support to the Lebanese authorities and commends the crucial role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon. It calls upon all parties concerned to implement all provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), to respect the Blue Line in its entirety, to cooperate fully with the United Nations and UNIFIL, and to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

Finally, the European Union would like to underline the fundamental importance of respecting and ensuring the promotion and defence of human rights. Human rights are universal and indivisible. They are a key prerequisite for peace and security. Violations of human rights need to be effectively remedied. Human rights, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and core international human rights treaties, include the responsibility of Governments to protect minorities and the freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Everyone has the freedom to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Therefore, in the context of recent violent incidents in the region, the European Union reaffirms its condemnation of all forms of intolerance and violence against persons, including on the basis of their religion or belief, wherever they take place.

When it comes to peace between Israelis and Palestinians, these vital elements of the future — State-building, strong economic development, respect for human rights and security — need to be nurtured, but nurtured in the context of resumed serious negotiations on all final status issues, which should lead to a two-State solution. Regional security is at stake. By ending the conflict, both parties, as well as the entire region and beyond, have much to gain. The European Union reiterates its readiness to contribute substantially to a comprehensive and sustainable solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): First of all, I should like to congratulate you, Madam President, your country and your delegation for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I also wish to express my appreciation to you and the other members of the Security Council for this opportunity to address this Chamber on a matter that is of grave importance to us all — the peace, security and stability of the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his useful briefing, which set the tone for today's open debate.

At the outset, the Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, but at the same time it wishes to stress certain points.

The timing of the Security Council's open debate today is indeed apt and well chosen. As we enter the new year, with renewed hope and resolve to work harder to attain international peace and security, there is no better choice than to start by discussing the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, inasmuch as it is one of the most sensitive and long-running issues on the agenda of the United Nations. Since it has become a permanent fixture of the United Nations agenda, however, there is a danger that we sometimes deal with the issue in a ritualistic and mechanical manner, thereby losing the urgency and relevance that it truly deserves. Despite years of debate and the substantial energy and resources spent, the resolution of this problem still remains elusive. I think it is time to change gear, and give peace and security in that region a chance.

In our highly interdependent and networked world, geographical distance and remoteness no longer isolate countries and regions from developments in

others. The Middle East is a major source of oil and a big market for the exports and services of many countries, including the Philippines, and its stability and progress are essential for world peace and security. More than 2 million of my countrymen and women live and work in the Middle East. That is why the Philippine Government has an additional reason for attaching the utmost importance for peace and security to prevail in that troubled land.

The Road Map to peace between Israel and Palestine has so far been hampered by obstacles and difficulties. Time and patience seem to be running out. If this issue is not addressed, it could unfortunately lead again to greater tension, hostility and, worse, armed conflict. This impatience is reflected by the growing view that if Israel and Palestine cannot come to terms, then the outside world or other forces that may come into play have no choice but to impose peace on them. But we know all too well, and history teaches us, that durable and long-lasting peace must come from within and not from without.

The Philippines shares with the Palestinian people their legitimate aspirations to achieve justice, peace and freedom. For many years, the Philippines has joined in the global clamour for the establishment of a Palestinian homeland to help alleviate the dire situation of the Palestinian people. In that regard, similar to other like-minded States, the Philippines considers the two-State solution to be an effective answer to the peace problem. The Philippines has also repeatedly expressed its support for the complete and unconditional lifting of the blockade imposed by the State of Israel on the occupied Palestinian territories, especially Gaza. The embargo is counterproductive, and it serves only to collectively punish the hapless civilians, particularly women and children, in Gaza.

As the international community anxiously awaits any breakthroughs in the peace talks between Israel and Palestine, I wish to point out one important building block, or a direction, of the foundation for long-lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. I am referring to the goal of making the region free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

One of the tangible achievements of the successful 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regarded how to make progress on the 1995 Review Conference resolution on the Middle East, which called for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. The Philippines views the road to the establishment of this nuclear-free zone as a critically important confidence-building measure. We are convinced that the process can coexist with the ongoing peace process or initiatives, including those being undertaken by the Quartet for the region.

The Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol.I)) states:

> "The Conference reaffirms its endorsement of the aims and objectives of the Middle East peace process, and recognizes that efforts in this regard, as well as other efforts, contribute to, inter alia, a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction." (*Part I, Conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions, section IV, para. 2)*

In that regard, I wish to highlight key points agreed to at the 2010 NPT Review Conference with regard to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

First is the convening by the United Nations Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, in consultation with the States of the region, of a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Second is the appointment by the United Nations Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, in consultation with the States of the region, of a facilitator with a mandate to support the implementation of the 1995 resolution by conducting consultations with the States of the region in that regard and undertaking preparations for the 2012 conference.

Third is the designation by the United Nations Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, in consultation with the States of the region, of a host Government for the 2012 Conference.

Time is ticking away and 2012 is just around the corner. The Philippines therefore urges the Secretary-General and the three depository States to carry out the tasks that have been assigned to them by the 2010 NPT Review Conference with haste, while at the same time taking the utmost care to ensure that these tasks are

done well and, of course, in consultation the countries of the region, as stated in the consensus Document.

The 2012 conference presents a rare chance to show the seriousness and goodwill of stakeholders. In essence, all concerned countries must be well prepared to make peace or to give a chance for peace in that region. The conference is a fresh start for all. Once again, I urge all concerned Member States to seize this rare opportunity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on having assumed the presidency of the Security Council for this month. As this is the first time I have addressed the Council since the new year, I would also like to congratulate the new non-permanent members of the Security Council, namely, Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa, and wish them great success.

The question of Palestine is undoubtedly the greatest problem facing humankind since the Second World War. The occupation of Palestine, in terms of both its root causes and its consequences, is the greatest and most painful tragedy that has afflicted humankind in modern history.

More than six decades of massacre, home demolitions, food and medicine embargos, abduction and imprisonment; the threatening of its neighbours in various ways, including with nuclear weapons; the waging of numerous wars against Palestine and Lebanon; the assassination of people, political and religious figures and elites; overt and covert interference in the political, economic and cultural affairs of other States; violations of international law and international humanitarian law and all-out violations of human rights, including the killing of children and women — all of this should be reason enough for the international community to take decisive measures to stop these brutalities and grant the people of Palestine the legitimate rights of which they have been deprived for decades.

Despite strong international condemnation, illegal settlements are expanding much faster than ever and an ever greater number of Palestinian homes, including historical sites, are being demolished. The orchestrated construction work is undoubtedly intended to alter the demographic composition and character of the Palestinian territories, particularly in Jerusalem and surrounding areas. It is exactly for this purpose that the Israeli regime has expedited its construction work and is preparing itself for yet another major settlement expansion in occupied East Jerusalem. According to this newly revealed plan, some 1,400 homes will be added to the Gilo settlement near the West Bank town of Bethlehem. This would be the occupying regime's largest known settlement expansion since the plan to add 1,600 homes unveiled last March.

It is very urgent that the international community take this issue more seriously than ever. We therefore welcome the initiative of the League of Arab States, supported by the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Conference, in preparing a draft resolution on the necessity to cease all settlement activities by the Zionist regime. Regarding this draft, we would like to state that we wholeheartedly support the spirit within which it has been presented, aiming at securing the rights of the Palestinian people and preventing the aggression and brutality of the occupying force against the people of Palestine, particularly at this crucial moment.

Of course, the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the draft resolution is without prejudice to its principled position of not recognizing, implicitly or explicitly, the legitimacy of the Israeli regime. Our position is clear: while the Islamic Republic of Iran stands together with all other nations and States that support the people of Palestine and calls on all others to support a final solution to end this great historic tragedy, it believes that the only solution for Palestine is the holding of a general referendum with the participation of all Palestinians regardless of religion or where they live in order to determine the system of Government they wish to have.

Today we need to act collectively to demonstrate our unqualified support to the cause of the Palestinians, and to rally to the aid of those who have been deprived of their rights.

Allow me to take this opportunity to say a few words on developments in Lebanon and the issue of the indictment by the so-called Special International Tribunal on the assassination of the former Lebanese premier, the late Rafiq Hariri. We believe that using political pressure to issue a totally politically motivated verdict in the name of justice not only discredits the

international judicial system, but would also create an unhealthy situation with ramifications for peace and stability in the region. We strongly believe that we should let regional initiatives, along with internal political mechanisms in Lebanon, seek and attain a solution to this issue, without the intervention of any other major Powers.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Wetland (Norway): The year 2011 will clearly be a critical crossroads in the Middle East peace process. By August, Prime Minister Fayyad's Government is set to complete its two-year plan for Palestinian State-building. The agreed timeframe of the currently stalled Israeli-Palestinian negotiations will also come to an end. In other words, the time to seize the opportunity is now. Failing to do so will not merely result in yet another lost opportunity; the very prospect of a negotiated two-State solution is at stake. That is why we must all stand firm behind the stated goal of negotiating a framework agreement on permanent status and a subsequent comprehensive peace treaty, within the agreed timeline.

This was a main message voiced by the Foreign Minister of Norway during his visit to the region this month. As Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC), Minister Støre also expressed his confidence that the international donor community will do its share to make this happen. At the AHLC meeting here in New York last September, we were greatly encouraged by the World Bank conclusion that the Palestinian Authority stands ready to establish a State in the near future. We have no doubt that, at the upcoming AHLC meeting in April, to be convened by Norway and hosted by the European Union in Brussels, major donors will recommit to help the Fayyad Government bring the State-building project to completion by the August deadline.

However, by September 2011, we will need to see a substantial breakthrough on the political track. The bottom-up approach to Palestinian State-building is in itself not sufficient. Questions will arise in earnest concerning its sustainability beyond 2011 if a decisive top-down push is not brought to bear.

If the Palestinian State-to-be is to break out of structural donor dependence, it will need political and economic conditions to do so. Restricted access to resources and markets in Area C and East Jerusalem, as well as to foreign markets, is a major barrier to economic growth in the private sector. This potential must be tapped to fuel the drive towards independence.

The peace process is in a fragile state. Norway is deeply concerned, and so we call on the parties to urgently return to negotiations in good faith. Both sides know perfectly well what they have to do and what they must not do to create an environment conducive to negotiations. For one, maintaining security for all is a key factor for the parties to build confidence and trust in each other as partners in peace. Moreover, it is imperative to refrain from actions that are illegal under international law and that are gradually eroding the ground on which the two-State solution is to be built. In that respect, we take note of the Security Council's draft resolution on Israeli settlements submitted yesterday.

Current policies in the occupied Palestinian territory are simply not sustainable, and time is running out. If international donors lose sight of the two-State solution, it will no longer be possible to take their tireless support for granted. Two decades after the Madrid peace conference, a real sense of urgency is overdue, and decisive action should not be too much to ask for. Not only should the parties return to the table; they must act rapidly to rescue the two-State solution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. AlNafisee (Saudi Arabia)(*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Council and the Secretary-General for their efforts to achieve international peace and security in the face of changing circumstances and threats throughout the world at this critical stage. I would also like to thank Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe for his detailed briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine.

The suffering of the Palestinian people began at the same time as the idea of giving land to a landless people. In that context, the first issue was land and the refugees became the second. Later issues involved settlements, the revision of history and the demolition of religious sites. The Palestinian people paid the price for each of these scourges due to the international community's complete failure to enforce resolutions of international legitimacy against the occupier.

If the United Nations, represented by the Security Council, had fulfilled its role, the Palestinian people would not have had to endure this continued suffering. For more than half a century, Israel has unleashed its worst policies against the people of Palestine, including murder, deportation, imprisonment, blockades, the annexation of land, the confiscation of property, and the looting and plundering of the resources of Palestine. These actions of the Israeli occupation forces seek to perpetuate the destruction of the Palestinian people and its infrastructure, subject it to greater oppression and suffering, and systematically drive the Palestinians to despair and frustration.

The Arabs have chosen peace, not surrender. Their demand was and continues to be for the enforcement of international legitimacy, starting with the implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land in exchange for a just and comprehensive peace. This necessarily requires full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories to the 1967 borders and the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes with full restoration of their rights. That will enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to establish their independent State on their national soil with East Jerusalem as its capital. It will also require Israel's withdrawal from the Syrian Golan Heights and the Lebanese Shaba'a farms.

To address Israeli violations of international legitimacy is to address violations of international law and the international community's lack of will to shoulder its responsibilities for maintaining peace and security. The Israeli occupation forces have exceeded the limits of international legitimacy in their application of any number of policies, including building the apartheid wall, building and expanding settlements in the occupied territories, and increasing illegal colonization measures.

In addition, the Israeli Government's financing, protecting and arming of settlers has enabled the building of more settlements and resulted in rapid growth over the past few months. Last year, the world witnessed the Israeli project to build 900 housing units in the Gilo settlement, south of occupied Jerusalem. This action was criticized by the entire international community, including the so-called friends of Israel.

Moreover, Israel recently decided through its so-called Israeli Building Management Committee to launch a larger project to build 1,400 housing units in the same settlement under the name Gilo: Southern Slopes. Reports indicate that an even larger project includes a vast plan for 4,000 housing units to attract families from other areas. Such continued expansion, along with the indiscriminate demolition of houses in the occupied Palestinian territories — most recently of the historic Shepherd Hotel — would create obstacles to any peace initiative, as the wall and settlements surrounding most cities of the West Bank will make it nearly impossible to establish a contiguous, viable Palestinian State in the future.

Israel's illegal measures and practices against the Palestinian people not only constitute violations of the United Nations Charter, humanitarian law and resolutions of international legitimacy; they also undermine any slim chance for peace. Furthermore, such unilateral practices prevent any international initiative or effort to achieve peace and undermine any international drive to hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its actions. From this rostrum my Government calls on the international community, the United Nations and the Quartet in particular to adopt a comprehensive, strategic approach to achieving the immediate and complete cessation of all settlement activities in the occupied territories.

For the past six decades, the Arab-Israeli conflict has dominated all issues in the Middle East. This has led in turn to extremism and the expansion of terrorism and created a critical deterrent to development and reform efforts in the region, which should play a civilized role instead of being torn by conflicts that sap its energy and squander its resources.

In conclusion, all the Arab countries have stressed their continued commitment to a just and comprehensive peace based on international legitimacy. In return, these countries continue to await a matching, serious Israeli commitment. In this context, the Israeli side must immediately accept the Arab Peace Initiative, which is the only way to achieve a lasting and comprehensive peace between the two sides and a definitive solution that is equitable for all parties.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Jomaa (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my great honour and privilege to address the Security Council on behalf of the Arab Group on the situation in

the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I would like to begin by congratulating the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on its assumption of the Council presidency this month and to wish it every possible success. My gratitude goes also to Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing to the Council.

The situation in the Middle East is entering a new and decisive phase that requires that each of us take a firm position. A prompt and serious international commitment is necessary to end Israel's occupation policies, which continue to exacerbate the suffering of the Palestinian people and cause escalating tensions and provocations. That, unfortunately, impedes the resumption of the peace process. This is a very serious phase, which the international community must address with a great deal of responsibility and caution in order to avoid any exacerbation of tension in the situation and prevent any risk of explosion.

The situation on the ground is extremely alarming. The Arab Group would like to reaffirm very clearly that Israel's obstinacy in implementing its settlement policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, constitute ongoing violations of international law and relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. These practices undermine the possibility of achieving peace and the creation of a sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Arab Group also reaffirms Israel's sole and full responsibility for the failure of the negotiation process launched in Washington, D.C., in September as a result of its preference for colonial settlement activities over peace. Israel's behaviour is a brazen challenge to international unanimity in asserting the illegality of the settlements and the very serious impact of the pursuit of these activities on the possibility of reaching peace and a two-State solution. Everyone here will remember that the Arab States have addressed the peace process in a very positive and responsible way. They afforded international efforts undertaken by many parties every possible chance to ensure that this process would advance in the hope of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that would guarantee a two-State solution within pre-1967 borders.

The Arab Peace Initiative commission has met several times over the past few months and adopted many decisions to stay the Initiative's course while absolutely rejecting Israel's continued colonial settlement activities and arbitrary practices. Israel's pursuit of its policy of provocation, its settlement activity and practices, and collective punishment aimed at the Palestinian people, as well as the inhumane blockade imposed on nearly 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza, have led to an impasse and undermined all prospects for the peace process. In the meantime, unfortunately, these practices proliferate and get worse.

All of that is alarming, and leads us to ask ourselves whether Israel, the occupying Power, is truly serious about achieving peace in the region. It is very important that we remind all the members of the Council and all States Members of the United Nations of the reality of some of these serious practices, which must stop immediately if we want to see the peace process relaunched and stability reign in the region. Let us recall that these policies include the continued practice of violence and terror against Palestinian civilians by Israeli settlers seeking to annex more Palestinian land and maintain the status quo; the ongoing assassinations of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli occupation forces in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; the continuing illegal inhuman blockade of the Gaza Strip; the increase in military actions against civilians in the Gaza Strip, which have claimed the lives of many individuals; increased expulsions; the destruction of homes; and the withdrawal of Palestinians' rights of residency. These actions are in flagrant violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Additional illegal practices include changing the demographic composition and legal status of Jerusalem by expelling Palestinian inhabitants; the destruction of the historic Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem under a plan to construct a new settlement of 20 housing units, which threatens the geographic contiguity of the Palestinian territories and the viability of any future Palestinian State; the recent adoption by the municipal Government of Jerusalem of a plan to build 124 new housing units around East Jerusalem; and the recent announcement by the Jerusalem planning commission of a new plan providing for the construction of a further 1,400 housing units for Jewish settlers in annexed land in the occupied West Bank.

The Arab Group, while welcoming the rejection of such practices by the international community, calls for the implementation of real measures on the ground

and calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to put an immediate end to these practices and to fulfil its commitments within the framework of international law, international humanitarian law and its commitments to the Road Map and the various benchmarks of the peace process.

Unfortunately, the repeated calls of the Secretary-General and his condemnation of the continued occupation, as well as the appeals of the Quartet, the international community and the European Union, have not been met with any response from the Israeli occupying forces, which have continued their repressive practices in flagrant violation of the desire of the international community to help the Palestinian people, which has struggled under colonialist occupation for decades, to enjoy its right to freedom and independence. Accordingly, the Arab Group condemns these practices and calls on all influential parties, including the Quartet, to assume their responsibilities, address these issues, face down Israel's obstinate refusal to accept international legitimacy, and force it to accept efforts to build a just peace.

We also call on the Quartet to go beyond the mere adoption of statements and reiteration of positions. What is important now is to ensure that these positions are implemented on the ground by exerting the necessary pressure on the occupying forces. We cherish the hope that this will indeed take place following the Quartet meeting to be held in Munich on 5 February.

We also condemn the ongoing inhumane blockade imposed on Gaza and ask the international community to take every possible step to put an immediate end to this unjust blockade, lift all restrictions to freedom of movement, enable access of humanitarian assistance, and cooperate in a more serious and effective way with the efforts of the United Nations agencies to rebuild the Gaza Strip and enable its inhabitants to enjoy their basic rights to life, housing, education and health.

The Arab Group reaffirms its absolute rejection of any activity aimed at changing the demographic, religious and social composition of the holy city of Jerusalem, of any attack on holy sites, and of any attempt at arbitrary destruction of homes or expulsion of people. We condemn these continued practices and ask the international community to take a firm position to ensure that an end is put to them and prevent the maintenance of the status quo.

Regarding the situation in the Middle East with specific reference to the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, the Arab Group affirms the Arab position that a just and lasting peace with Israel can be achieved only through Israel's full withdrawal from occupied Arab territories to the lines of 4 June 1967, including East Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Golan and the territories that are still occupied in the south of Lebanon. It is necessary that an independent Palestinian State be established, with East Jerusalem as its capital, pursuant to the Arab Peace Initiative; to ensure a just return of the Palestinian refugees; and to implement all relevant United Nations resolutions.

Allow me to remind the Council that the ongoing violations of Lebanese airspace by Israel's forces and the violations of its commitments under resolution 1701 (2006) are all fraught with the threat of the return of tension to the region and the undermining of efforts to maintain stability.

The Arab Group calls for an end to these violations and to settlement in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan and reaffirms that all activities undertaken by Israel in the Golan aimed at changing its demographic and legal status, as well as Israeli measures aimed at exerting administrative authority there, are null and void and have no legal basis. The Arab Group calls for immediate withdrawal by Israel from the Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, as well as for the implementation of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

The international community cannot stand by passively in the face of the occupying Power's continued violations of every one of its commitments under international law, instruments and agreements. The enormous suffering of the peoples of the region has lasted far too long. There is no alternative to ending the occupation of Arab territories in order to ensure security and stability in a region to which, as everyone knows, the security and stability of the entire world are related.

The international community cannot permit any increase in tensions and frustration or the resumption of aggression against the lives of civilians. This is an immediate danger, and urgent and firm measures must be taken to address the underlying causes of the tension. The Secretary-General has reaffirmed in his recent statements and briefings on the Middle East that the need is urgent and that the strategy for addressing

this situation must be changed. We must therefore overcome the shortcomings and answer the repeated calls on the international community to preserve the rights of Palestinian civilians and protect them from such oppressive practices so as to ensure that the peace process has the chance to resume.

The Arab Group supports the resumption of the peace process, but its position is clear. Relaunching Israeli-Palestinian negotiations requires an immediate halt to all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The established benchmarks of the peace process must be honoured. An end to settlement activity is not the only condition required for the peace process to resume. International and humanitarian law must also be implemented. Continued settlement activities undermine the very nature of negotiations. Historic Palestinian territories are, unfortunately, are shrinking and being drained of their life.

In this context, a draft resolution on the occupied Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem has been introduced, calling for an immediate end to settlement activity, which would enable resumed negotiations to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region. The draft resolution enjoys the support of the Arab ministerial meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh and of the majority of States Members of our Organization. It is sponsored by more than 120 States, which shows clearly that the international community is unanimous in confronting the imminent threat presented by these ongoing practices, which are condemned by all under international law, instruments and agreements.

The draft resolution contains consensus wording and is based on previous Security Council resolutions, as well as on a number of resolutions and statements made by relevant actors and parties. It recalls the basic positions regarding settlement activity and articulates a position aimed at preserving the peace process's chances of success and at fulfilling the aspirations of the peoples of the region, and of the international will as a whole, with respect to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to freedom and dignity and to build an independent State on its territory.

The members of the Arab Group support the draft resolution in a demonstration of their commitment to international legitimacy and their desire to abide by their obligations as members of the international community responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. The draft resolution is an opportunity to breathe new life into the peace negotiations and, indeed, to save them in order to ensure peace. All those who cherish peace are called on to support the draft resolution and to ensure the implementation of justice and righteousness throughout the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to congratulate the new members of the Security Council: Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa. I would also like to express my thanks to you, Madame President, for organizing this open debate to address the deteriorating situation in the occupied Arab territories under the agenda item, "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". This item is concerned exclusively with the Israeli-Arab conflict and the Palestinian question, and not with any other urgent matter beyond that political or geographical area and outside the item's historic definition, regardless of its possible importance.

In this Chamber and beyond its walls, the unanimous view is that tension in the Middle East is greater than anywhere else in the world. The situation is extremely grave and could well have dramatic consequences for international peace and security. The achievement of a comprehensive and just peace is an urgent matter of relevance to all concerned parties in the region and throughout the world.

But talking of the need for peace is one thing; the ability to act and achieve it is another. While everyone reiterates the importance of achieving a peace to which we all aspire, Israel continues to repudiate it and to defy the entire international community, including Powers that are considered to be its closest friends and allies. This extremely serious situation jeopardizes peace and security in the region, while the Security Council is unable to honour its obligations and commitments or to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter.

The situation reveals Israel's methodical attempt to violate rights that runs counter to the basic tenets of international and international humanitarian law. Israel's aggressive behaviour and unrestrained settlement efforts in occupied Arab territories are

condemned by the international community and violate such international principles and agreements as the Charter of the United Nations and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. They also constitute a violation of hundreds of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. In addition to this are the annexation of territory, deportations, evictions and the transfer of settlers to Arab lands. There is also the problem of the racist wall on Palestinian territory and the Judaization of Jerusalem. These racist practices are carried out under the willing gaze of the occupying army and a deafening international silence denoting more than complicity.

As we talk of settlements in the Palestinian territories, it is appropriate for us to remind Council members that Israeli settlements have been an essential element of plans by the leaders of the Zionist movement ever since the partition of Palestine in 1947. The first Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, established this movement, told a Zionist meeting that

> "after we become a strong force, as a result of the creation of a state, we shall abolish partition and expand into the whole of Palestine."

Ben-Gurion said this in 1949. A year later, he wrote to his son:

> "We are going to create an extremely sophisticated defense force, an elite corps. There will be no gainsaying that our army will be one of the best in the world and nobody, my son, will then prevent us from colonizing the whole of Palestine. There is no doubt about it."

Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Defense Minister during the aggression of 1967, who was a witness to the beginning of settlement activity, stated on 4 April 1969 to *Ha aretz*, the Israeli newspaper:

> "We came to this country, which was already populated by Arabs and we are establishing a Hebrew, that is, a Jewish state here. Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahlal arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Hanifieh; and Kefar Yehushua in the place of Tal al-Shuman. There is not a single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population."

Today's meeting coincides with the second anniversary of the Israeli aggression against Gaza, which cost the lives of over 1,000 people and left thousands of innocent civilians wounded. This was very clearly noted in the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48), which unambiguously stated that Israel deliberately targeted civilians. The report described Israeli practices during this attack as war crimes and serious violations of international humanitarian law, which could be deemed crimes against humanity.

The perpetrators of these crimes remain unpunished. This encourages Israel to continue its unfair and inhumane blockade against the population of Gaza, defying the will of the international community, which has called for the lifting of the blockade. Israel did not stop there. Its response to international appeals to lift the blockade was the attack on the freedom flotilla, which was on its way to Gaza on a purely humanitarian mission. Nine peace activists were killed in international waters and dozens wounded.

We recall that the General Assembly recently adopted two resolutions supporting the calls of the Human Rights Commission to the United Nations, the entire United Nations system, including the Security Council, to implement the proposals in the Goldstone report.

The Security Council must therefore bear its responsibilities. It must prosecute the Israeli perpetrators and punish them for the crimes they have committed in Gaza if it wishes to establish justice and to prevent impunity, two objectives of the Organization itself.

The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan is a part of this bleak picture. Israel still refuses to return the occupied Syrian Golan to its motherland, Syria. It still refuses to accept international resolutions, particularly resolution 497 (1981), which considers the annexation of the Syrian Golan to be null and void. Israel continues to terrorize citizens there.

In provocation, escalation and defiance of the will of the international community, the Knesset recently adopted a law to organize a general referendum before any withdrawal from the occupied

Syrian Golan and occupied East Jerusalem. This is the way in which Israel deals with issues that are not in its purview to address. It represents a flagrant disregard for international law and the position and will of the entire international community regarding the occupied Syrian Golan and East Jerusalem. Israel must implement resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We assert here that this recent Israeli initiative and all others stand totally rejected and do not alter the fact that the Golan is an occupied Syrian territory. It cannot be the subject of negotiations. The return of the Golan in its entirety to the 4 June 1967 border constitutes the basis for peace. Once again, we reiterate that Israel should not consider Syria's demands to be painful concessions. These are lands and rights that have been usurped and that must be returned and restored.

We had hoped to see the Secretary-General and the Council implement their minimum prerogatives regarding resolution 497 (1981) by discussing this provocative Israeli behaviour and taking measures demonstrating their rejection of this serious Israeli action regarding the occupied Syrian Golan. We have made a very detailed presentation to the Security Council regarding this serious violation of international law and legitimacy. It is unacceptable and irrational for us to be asked to bring forward new proof of our desire for peace while Israel continues to occupy our land, to attack our people and to threaten peace and security.

The important question here that demands answers is: How long shall Israel remain above the law? How long shall Israel enjoy impunity as it pursues its policy of aggression? How long shall the Security Council be incapable of taking concrete measures to deal with the horrors perpetuated by Israel in the occupied Arab territories? How long shall the silence regarding Israeli policy, which is pushing the region to an explosion, be maintained?

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): At the outset, I would like to extend the congratulations of the delegation of Algeria to your friendly country, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to you personally, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I would also like to thank you for organizing this open debate on an important question on the agenda of the international community as a whole.

I would also like to thank the outgoing members of the Security Council — Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda — which served with dedication in pursuit of peace and security and respect for the rule of law in every situation. I also want to congratulate the incoming members — Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa — on beginning their mandates. I wish them success in fulfilling their responsibilities.

In spite of recent efforts to revitalize the peace process, Israel continues to carry out its illegal settlements and colonization activities in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, which are accompanied by escalating settler violence, home demolitions, forced evictions and the ongoing construction of the separation wall despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The recent allocation by the Israeli Government of significant additional financial resources to expand settlements through 2012 demonstrates clearly that Israel is not on the path to peace and that the only goal pursued by Israeli policy seems to be to undermine any future prospects for a peaceful settlement. It is obvious that those measures are intended to annex Palestinian territory by bringing about long-term demographic changes, removing traces of Palestinian heritage and fortifying the Israeli presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Furthermore, the situation is Gaza remains disturbing from the perspective of human rights and international law. Palestinians continue to be punished collectively through the isolation of the 1.5 million residents of Gaza for several years, including the interdiction of exports from the Strip and the prevention of the flow of goods and people, even in life-and-death situations. Algeria reiterates its demand for Israel's immediate lifting of its illegal blockade and for the opening of all crossing points to Gaza, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009), General Assembly resolution ES-10/18 and other relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Similarly, the imprisonment of about 10,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails, where ill-treatment and torture are widely used, represents a matter of serious concern for my country. The international seminar in

support of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails organized in Algiers on 5 December 2010, with the participation of delegations from several countries, called on the international community to address this scandalous challenge to international humanitarian law and to adopt a clear and urgent stand for the immediate release of these illegally detained people, among whom are children and women.

It is the responsibility of the Security Council to exercise its prerogatives in order to halt the brutal practices of the Israeli Government by taking the required actions to ensure respect for, and compliance with, the ruling of the International Court of Justice, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Negotiations remain imperative for achieving the two-State solution based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, including the principle of land for peace, which means the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab occupied territories.

Algeria reiterates that any negotiated outcome between the parties must result in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. A complete cessation of colonization and settlement activities and human rights violations is clearly a prerequisite to creating a more stable environment conducive to resuming the peace process and achieving the two-State solution for peace.

As a sponsor of the draft resolution contained in document S/2011/24, Algeria urges the 15 members of the Security Council to step up to the challenge at stake and to ensure its timely adoption.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): It is indeed a great privilege to participate in today's meeting with you in the Chair, Madam President. You have a very onerous task, which you are carrying out magnificently.

I would like to congratulate our friends that have just joined the Council, namely, India, Colombia, Germany, Portugal and South Africa, but Portugal specifically. We wish them success in their work in the Council.

I align myself with my Egyptian colleague's statement as head of the Non-Aligned Movement.

A lot has not changed since we were last here, but there is always hope. During the last open debate on the Middle East in the Chamber (see S/PV.6404), many of us urged the Security Council, the Quartet and the international community to act in tandem and prevent the collapse of Israel-Palestine dialogue and direct negotiations. Three months later, we regret to note that all efforts to ensure continuity have failed. The quest for sustainable peace in the Middle East and a permanent political settlement to the Israel-Palestinian question based on the two-State solution appears as elusive as ever. In that context, I share the assessment of many Member States that this impasse is due to Israeli expansionist thoughts, vision and policy, which manifest themselves in the form of the ongoing settlement activities.

This is a clear violation of international law, and should be taken as a major provocation. This month, the very old Shepherd Hotel in Jerusalem was demolished to build 20 new housing units. Was that really necessary? Elsewhere in the West Bank, the altering of the status of centuries-old prayer places, mosques, churches and cemeteries of the Palestinian people goes on unabated in the name of history, excavation and creating — truthfully — new housing space. Each block of those settlements constitutes a major roadblock towards what we can consider to be a final peaceful settlement — if ever. It complicates the peace process and vitiates the atmosphere for talks. Israel must stop building new settlements or using settlement activity as a political tool in the peace process.

I am surprised that, despite the odds, the Palestinians have done well. We hear the name of Salam Fayyad, who has taken important strides towards implementing the plan announced in August 2009 for the building of State institutions within two years. He has done it; I extend my congratulations to Ambassador Mansour.

Many independent studies, including the *Economic Monitoring Report* of the World Bank, have praised this performance and, in my mind, this delivery of public services by the Palestinian Authority shows that the corner has been turned. The Middle East Quartet, despite its own banes, acknowledged these developments in its statement of 21 September 2010.

The policies of self-reliance and empowerment and the creation of economic opportunities pursued by the Palestinian Authority have established a solid edifice for Palestinian statehood and removed all pretexts for the occupation.

The goal of establishing a Palestinian State by August 2011 is well within our grasp. We must not let it slip away; we must not allow peace and stability to fall by the wayside. Failure to meet the Oslo Accord deadlines of 1999 triggered the second intifada. Missing the 2005 deadline for Palestine statehood set in the Quartet Road Map of 2003 precipitated violence and bloodshed. Do we want such calamities to revisit the region?

The Security Council must therefore fulfil its Charter responsibility and the Quartet Road Map, and ensure that the historic opportunity to create a viable Palestinian State by August 2011 is not lost. The Council can do so by calling upon Israel to unconditionally cease all settlement activity and resume direct negotiations at the earliest with the Palestinian Authority on all outstanding issues.

Pakistan is supportive of lasting peace for all the inhabitants of the Middle East, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity or nationality. That is where we stand. The framework for such a peace has been elaborately laid down in resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008); the Madrid terms of reference; the Arab Peace Initiative; and the several Quartet Road Maps. We share the collective objective of the international community for an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side and in peace with its Israeli neighbours. Our prayer is that today's open debate in the Council will serve to bring us nearer to that objective.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I congratulate you, Madame, on the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I thank the outgoing members of the Council and congratulate to the new members. We will continue to work closely with all members of the Council, of course.

Australia is genuinely committed to peace and security in the Middle East. We support a just and enduring peace based on a negotiated two-State solution based on the 1967 borders that would allow Israel and a future Palestinian State to live side by side in peace and security. As our Foreign Minister said during the general debate of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session,

> "All States members of the General Assembly should welcome the prospect of both an Israeli and a Palestinian State being represented at the sixty-sixth session of the Assembly, to be held next year" (*A/65/PV.16, p. 41*).

We should all support every serious effort to achieve that.

Australia commends ongoing international efforts to realize peace, including by the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative. During his visit last month to the region, including to Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, and Israel, our Foreign Minister, Mr. Rudd, underscored to both parties and to regional leaders that now is the time to seize the opportunity for peace. As he said publicly at the time that time was running out and that what was needed was not just another peace process, but a peace outcome. What is needed is not another Road Map; we need to see the destination to which the road is taking us.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders need to return to direct talks as a matter of urgency. Both sides must refrain from actions that undermine confidence, including — decisively — the construction of settlements. Australia unambiguously opposes new Israeli settlements. They are illegal. They are not only an obstacle to peace — they actively undermine the prospects for achieving peace. They compromise the future of a two-State solution, and they must stop. We agree with the Quartet in its statement of 21 September that Israel's previous moratorium on settlements had a positive and beneficial impact on the environment for negotiations. In our view, a cessation of settlement activity now would unquestionably assist peace efforts.

Australia is serious about its support for a two-State solution. We will continue and increase our support for the practical establishment on the ground of a viable Palestinian State. We have already provided almost $70 million in direct budget support to the Palestinian Authority, and Foreign Minister Rudd announced in Ramallah in December that Australia is now developing a five-year development partnership with the Palestinian Authority that will include regular budget support and the provision of scholarships

focusing on those disciplines critical to institution-building. This multi-year agreement — the starting point for an enhanced development partnership — is the first of its kind by a development partner with the Palestinian Authority and reflects our recognition that an independent, viable Palestinian State requires predictable funding to plan ahead and to budget for the provision of services that any functioning State must be able to provide to its citizens.

We are also increasing our support through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, including our first multi-year commitment, rather than the annual contribution that we have made in the past to the core resources of the Agency.

The situation on the ground in Gaza remains extremely serious. We welcome the relaxation of some Israeli restrictions on access to and from Gaza, and of course we recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns. But we remain very concerned at the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The easing of restrictions already announced must be implemented now, and we urge Israel to lift the remaining restrictions.

Finally, I must note that Australia remains firm in our support for the sovereignty, independence and unity of the Lebanese State and its people. All parties need to play a constructive role and, of course, refrain from any actions that might create instability. We encourage and support the current international efforts to mobilize in support of Lebanon. We call on all parties to cooperate with the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, in accordance with resolution 1757 (2007), and to allow it to complete its important work.

To conclude, there can be no doubt that the situation between Israel and Palestine is — as was said by the Permanent Observer of Palestine this morning — at a critical juncture and that the prospects for resuming a credible peace process are quickly fading. As one of the Council members reminded us today, it is 20 years since the current peace process was launched in Madrid. It is, in fact, 65 years since the question of Israel and Palestine has been before the United Nations in one way or another. We very strongly agree with the comment made this morning that this should and must be the last year of the process. All the parties have an historic and indeed human obligation to do more than just recommit to peace and speak the rhetoric of peace. They and all of us in the international community need to act to do all we can to achieve peace now and to move, as another speaker recently said, beyond the rhetoric and the inability to act to produce the ability and determination to act, and then to act.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to greet the Council as it meets to address the crucial and vital issue of the situation in the Middle East, which is of great importance to all of us. This is not the first time that the Security Council has addressed the situation in the Middle East and the challenge that it represents to the entire international community. Everyone hopes that our collective efforts to address this challenge will be commensurate with its magnitude.

I take this opportunity to address a substantive and important issue that no one can overlook, as it is the main obstacle to the attainment of peace and the relaunching of negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, namely, the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The United Nations has adopted many resolutions calling on Israel to abide by international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, to put an end to the illegal practices that jeopardize the rights of the Palestinian people, and to halt the building and expansion of settlements. The United Nations considers these settlements to be null and void. In this connection, we would like to stress the following points.

First, the international community, including the Member States represented in the Council and unanimous international public opinion, agrees that the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem represent a flagrant violation of international law and the United Nations Charter. It defies the will of the international community and relevant international resolutions, especially resolution 446 (1979), which considered the construction of settlements of no legal value, as it represents a serious obstacle to the attainment of a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

Secondly, the International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion of 2004 on the building of the separation wall, concluded that the wall represents a violation of fundamental human rights.

Thirdly, Israel's ongoing construction and expansion of settlements and its defiance of the will of the international community undermine the negotiation process aimed at achieving a two-State solution on the basis of United Nations resolutions, the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and other terms of reference.

Fourthly, the expansion of settlements prevents the resumption of negotiations between the two parties and thus hampers the prospects for peace and a peaceful settlement of the question of the Middle East, the lack of which threatens peace and security in the region.

As it witnesses the expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and the resulting dire consequences following the wide-ranging international rejection of these illegal activities, the Security Council, as the organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, should fully shoulder its responsibilities. It should oblige Israel to freeze and put an end to its settlement activities so as to pave the way for the resumption of negotiations in order to reach a two-State solution, and establish an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, I would like to state that my country, which is a sponsor and supporter of the draft resolution under consideration, calls upon all the members of the Security Council to adopt it if they truly desire peace and security in the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): Madame President, let me begin by thanking your country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and you personally for steering this very important open debate on the situation in the Middle East. My delegation would also like to congratulate all the new members of the Council: Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa. We wish them all the very best in their work in the Council. I also would like to convey our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

I also wish to state that the delegation of Bangladesh aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Egypt and Tajikistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively. In addition, I wish to briefly make certain points that Bangladesh believes to be of importance.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, has always been of major concern to the international community and the United Nations. A durable and sustainable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the issue of Palestine, which is the core of the long-lasting crisis, must therefore be our collective strategic objective. All Member States should pledge complete commitment to this objective and throw their full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support behind its early realization.

Bangladesh is always ready to play a constructive role in this collective endeavour to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the two-State principle. Bangladesh unites with the international community in reaffirming its full support for the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for self-determination and freedom from continued occupation.

The people of Palestine are being denied their fundamental rights to self-determination and right to live freely in their own land, and displaced Palestinians have been denied their rights to return home and to live in dignity and safety. Unfortunately, this appears to be a collective failure on the part of the international community, and even more so of the people of Israel, who suffer deprivation as they fail to rise to the occasion by guaranteeing the people of Palestine their fundamental right to self-determination and to a sovereign State of their own, side by side with Israel. In order to achieve a lasting solution in the Middle East, it is very important to address the key issue, which is the prolonged and illegal occupation of Arab territories by Israel.

We are disheartened to see that, although Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority pledged in September 2010 to seek a framework agreement on permanent status within a year, that process has suffered a serious setback. This is because, regrettably, Israel did not renew a 10-month settlement moratorium, which did not include East Jerusalem, when it expired at the end of September 2010, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has refused to resume peace talks with Israel until it ends all settlement activity.

My delegation believes that direct negotiations will be successful only if there is sustained regional and international support for the talks, the parallel process of Palestinian State-building and the pursuit of a just, lasting and comprehensive regional peace as envisaged in the Fourth Geneva Convention and in the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Success also requires regional and international support for the principle of land for peace and the Madrid Conference terms of reference, which guarantee Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories back to the line of June 4 1967, and for the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative, which are the best guides for achieving a two-State solution.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Bangladesh's long-standing position that the continued illegal occupation of Palestine over the past six decades is the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region. Let me also reiterate our full support for a lasting peace for all inhabitants of the region, both Arabs and Israelis, and our strong commitment for the realization of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side and in peace with all its neighbours.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6471

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

Provisional

6471 st meeting

Thursday, 20 January 2011, 11 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Barbalić	(Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Members:	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Ms. Ziade
	Nigeria	Mr. Lolo
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The question concerning Haiti

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

11-21162 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question concerning Haiti

The President: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I should like to invite the Permanent Representative of Haiti to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Le Roy *(spoke in French)*: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in Haiti just over a year after the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010. I would, of course, like to begin by once again paying tribute to the memory of the victims of the earthquake, who numbered more than 220,000, and especially to the 102 United Nations staff members who lost their lives.

A few significant developments have taken place since my last briefing on 10 December. Council members will recall that the announcement of the preliminary results of the first round of presidential elections by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) on 7 December sparked demonstrations in a number of areas throughout the country. The demonstrators and many political and civil society actors denounced what they presumed to be massive fraud in favour of the candidate of the presidential camp.

On 14 December, the President of the Republic decided to invite a mission of electoral experts from the Organization of American States (OAS) to assess the electoral process. On 29 December, the Haitian Government, the CEP and the Joint OAS-Caribbean Community Electoral Observation Mission signed an agreement defining the terms of reference of that mission, the objectives of which included the evaluation of the practices and procedures used during the presidential elections of 28 November 2010, in particular the tabulation of votes, and to issue recommendations aimed at correcting the irregularities that had marred the first round of elections.

The OAS mission submitted its report to the Haitian Government on 13 January. On 17 January, during a visit to Port-au-Prince by the Secretary-General of the OAS, Mr. José Miguel Insulza, the Government committed itself to submitting the OAS report to the CEP in order to ensure that it would take its recommendations into account during the dispute procedure leading to the announcement of the definitive results of the first round. The report was then distributed to the member States of the OAS and published yesterday, 19 January.

The dispute procedure should resume tomorrow, 21 January. It is now up to the CEP to continue its work and bring the process to fruition, in accordance with the provisions of the Haitian Constitution and the Electoral Law. Only then will the CEP be in a position to announce the final results of the first round.

According to the terms of the agreement between the Government, the CEP and the OAS, a second OAS mission will soon be deployed to provide the CEP with technical and legal assistance for this contentious phase of the electoral process. According to the latest information we possess, the CEP intends to announce the final results of the first round on 31 January so as to be in a position to organize the second round of voting around mid-February. This is of course preliminary information.

In the meantime, it is now well known that on 16 January former President Jean-Claude Duvalier arrived in Port-au-Prince. On 18 January, he was brought before the Prosecutor's Office and questioned by the Public Prosecutor, who had filed a complaint against him. He was then released, but must remain available to the court. A number of other complaints have been filed against him since then, in particular yesterday.

(spoke in English)

Since the announcement of the preliminary results of the presidential elections in December, Haiti has been paralysed by political uncertainty. After a year marked by the devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010 and the ongoing cholera epidemic, it is of

paramount importance that the current political crisis be brought to a swift conclusion so that the Government and the people of Haiti can focus on the challenges of reconstruction and recovery.

President Préval's decision to invite the OAS to undertake an assessment of the first round of the 28 November elections was an important first step towards finding a peaceful way out of the current impasse. Having officially received the report of the OAS technical mission, the CEP must now honour its commitment to fully take into account the report's recommendations with a view to ensuring that the results of the elections truly reflect the will of the Haitian people.

Should the CEP decide otherwise, Haiti may well be faced with a constitutional crisis and the possibility of considerable unrest and insecurity. At this critical juncture, it is vital that the CEP be allowed to carry out its work without political interference and in full accordance with Haiti's Constitution and laws. I urge Member States to continue working with all parties to ensure that the CEP is able to steer the electoral process towards an outcome that is both credible and legitimate.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, Mr. Edmond Mulet, and his team have remained in close and constant contact with all key stakeholders on the ground, including President Préval, the main presidential candidates, the private sector, civil society and key members of the international community. Last week, I myself travelled to Haiti to participate in the one-year commemoration of the 12 January earthquake, where I also met with President Préval, Prime Minister Bellerive, the core group of ambassadors and other key stakeholders. In the critical days and weeks ahead, it is vital that the international community stand united in impressing upon all relevant actors in Haiti the need to set aside their narrow partisan interests and work towards a better future for their country.

For the time being, the overall security situation remains calm, although there have been some sporadic instances of violence related to the tense political climate. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) continues to work closely with the Haitian National Police to maintain public order and protect the civilian population, as well as key installations. Throughout this difficult period, the Haitian National Police have continued to conduct themselves in a highly professional manner, for which they should be commended. Nevertheless, the risk of further violence and unrest is ever-present, especially in this particular climate and in the coming weeks, and MINUSTAH will of course continue to monitor the situation very closely.

Under-Secretary-General Amos will brief members on the current efforts to combat the ongoing cholera epidemic. As Council members are aware, MINUSTAH continues to play an active role in the international response to the epidemic, in close cooperation with the members of the United Nations country team. While United Nations efforts remain focused on stemming the spread of the disease and limiting the death rate, we are also committed to shedding further light on the origins of the epidemic. To that end, on 6 January, the Secretary-General announced the creation of an independent panel composed of four world-class medical experts to investigate the cause of the cholera epidemic in Haiti. It is our hope that the panel will help to find the truth and put to rest the issue of the origins of the outbreak.

In conclusion, Haiti is at a crossroads. The choices made in coming days will determine whether the country continues to move forward along the path to stability and long-term development. The recommendations of the OAS technical mission provide the elements of a path out of the current crisis and merit our full support. We intend to continue to work with the Government, the CEP and all parties to ensure that dialogue and respect for the country's laws and institutions ultimately prevail.

The President: I thank Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos.

Ms. Amos: Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to speak about the still extremely grave humanitarian conditions in Haiti and for your continued attention to the situation there.

The one year anniversary of the earthquake was an occasion on which we remembered the terrible tragedy that took the lives of more than 200,000 people, among them so many of our colleagues. We will never forget them or their sacrifices.

Those of us who are involved in the humanitarian response have also been taking stock of what has been done to help earthquake-affected people over the past year and charting the course for the next 12 months and beyond. Looking back at the humanitarian work done over the past 12 months, and taking into account the devastation that the earthquake caused and the pre-existing difficult conditions in Haiti, a great deal has been accomplished. The United Nations humanitarian agencies, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which gave unwavering support to humanitarian work even before the earthquake, without which far less would have been accomplished, the Red Cross and the non-governmental organizations we work with in Haiti have all played their part.

Since 12 January 2010, some 1.5 million people have received help with shelter. Of those, about 800,000 are still in camps. The rest have been able to return home or have been provided transitional shelters or other arrangements. At least five litres of drinking water per person are being delivered to 1.2 million people daily. Over 11,000 latrines have been constructed, providing many people with the first modern sanitation they have experienced in their lives. And over 1.1 million children are receiving daily meals through the national school feeding programme, supported by the World Food Programme. Sixty-eight per cent of damaged schools have been cleared of debris, allowing more than 2 million children to return to school.

Over the past months, Haiti has been tested further by two shocks that required a major international response. In October, everyone working in Haiti pulled together to prepare the country for Hurricane Tomas. Thankfully, the hurricane did not have the devastating effect that had been feared. But the exercise highlighted the extremely serious vulnerabilities that exist for many of Haiti's poorest people, earthquake survivors and others.

Also in October, the cholera outbreak was confirmed. The outbreak has spread nation-wide and affected almost 200,000 people, with over 3,700 deaths so far. Haiti has ideal conditions for cholera's spread: poor and non-existing water, sanitation and health care infrastructure in many urban and rural areas and the density of population, especially in the slums of urban cities. And because cholera has not been present in Haiti for over 40 years, knowledge of how to prevent infections was non-existent, and still is, especially in the remote parts of the country.

Nonetheless, today the overall case fatality rate has declined from a peak of 9 per cent to around 2 per cent overall, although there are still spikes in some regions. This indicates that while the infection is still spreading around the country, the treatment facilities and the intensive public information campaigns launched to educate people about how to protect themselves are working. In Port-au-Prince the mortality rate has dropped to 1.2 per cent. Continuing this work requires stability in the country. If aid supplies and aid workers cannot move around freely, or if sick people cannot reach help in time, the fatality rate will quickly rise again. There is still an urgent need for massive mobilization activities to promote prevention and early treatment.

Malnutrition, chronically weak health systems, appallingly low literacy rates and widespread lack of access to clean water, sanitation and other basic services mean that humanitarian assistance is still an essential lifeline for hundreds of thousands of Haitians. Aid agencies are still providing water to more than 1 million people every day and food to 2 million people every month, as well as helping to keep over 2 million children in schools. These efforts need to continue at least through this year, which is why we have launched another humanitarian appeal for 2011, this time for $906 million — about 50 per cent less than we required in 2010. From that, $174 million is for the cholera response, only 27 per cent of which has been provided to date. We therefore need to scale up and do more, and do it quickly. Much more attention to the cholera response is needed if the improved response of the past weeks is to be sustained.

The relief effort has helped millions of people, but it has not, and will not, provide the long-term solutions that are desperately needed. Accelerating recovery efforts must be the absolute priority for 2011. For humanitarian assistance to phase down, recovery and reconstruction need to pick up. The Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission is central to this effort. We welcome the increased strategic role of the Commission and its support to technical ministries and partners in defining national plans in key areas, such as housing, debris removal and health. But even with that happening, it is important to still be realistic about how long it is going to take to get everybody to where they want to be and need to be.

We cannot expect that Haiti, the poorest and least developed country in the western hemisphere before the earthquake, will be rebuilt in one year, or even two. Humanitarian agencies are prepared to stand beside the poorest and most vulnerable Haitian people for as long as it takes to recover from this terrible past year, and through whatever the years ahead might hold. I thank the Council for its continued support.

The President: I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Haiti.

Mr. Cazeau (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the holding of this informational meeting concerning my country one year and eight days following the 12 January 2010 disaster, which is seared into the minds of the Haitian people and its brothers, sisters and friends throughout the world. I would like, through you Sir, to commend and thank Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy and his colleagues in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for their efforts, which have greatly benefited my country thanks to the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos and all the staff of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for their apt response to the situation in Haiti, which in less than one year suffered three disasters requiring emergency response. I would like to tell Ms. Amos that my delegation is aware that OCHA's experience in Haiti over the past year was in many respects not easy. Fortunately, however, under her asserted leadership, major challenges have been addressed to the extent possible.

At 4.53 p.m. on 12 January 2010 Haiti experienced the saddest moment in its history. To recall the remarks of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in marking the first anniversary of that fateful day:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Forty-seven seconds. It is not a long time. But the earthquake in Haiti was an eternity of sorrow. One year is not long either."

(*spoke in French*)

Indeed, a large swathe of our country was lost, resulting in more than a quarter of a million deaths among Haitians and foreigners alike; thousands left injured, orphaned or homeless; emotional and physical devastation, desolation and despair. The Government had just put in place its national development plan when this scourge struck the country and everything suddenly changed: priorities had to be reevaluated, and in most cases refocused and/or modified.

My delegation will always remember how the international community rallied to the aid of the Haitian people in less than 24 hours after the earthquake. Help arrived from all continents and air, sea and land was opened for the provision of humanitarian aid to Haiti. We will never forget these acts, which reinforce the bonds of friendship and understanding among peoples. We appreciate the gestures from all parts of the world and the generosity of the international community which, at the meeting on 31 March 2010, opened its wallet to pledge contributions that went beyond our expectations. Many donors have already made good on those promises, but not all funds have yet arrived. We nonetheless continue to believe that they will not fail to do so in due time.

We must recognize that Haiti needs to be rebuilt, not just patched up. This is an immense undertaking that will take time and call for human, financial and material resources. Well before 12 January 2010, Haiti was already struggling with major problems, which have only become worse. We must bear in mind that many of our colleagues in both the public and private sectors perished under the rubble, while others were handicapped or traumatized or have simply left the country. Services are therefore functioning with greatly reduced capacity and staff. The country faces a great variety of challenges every day, all of them urgent.

These challenges are without a doubt difficult to overcome, but they are not insurmountable, with the help of the international community. Those who have taken the floor before me have spoken quite frankly to paint an accurate picture of the situation. There is so much to do that at time we get the impression that nothing has been done.

Since its establishment in June 2010, the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission, led jointly by Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive and former President of the United States Bill Clinton, has approved 74 projects in various sectors such as education, health, development, agriculture and technical and professional assistance for the public and private sectors. Construction will soon begin on an

industrial park in the north of the country, which, when fully operational, will provide jobs to more than 20,000 citizens. A 350-bed teaching hospital is currently under construction in the centre of the country, thanks to cooperation between the Ministry of Health and Partners in Health. A central market has just been restored in Port-au-Prince for the traders of the capital. Commercial activities have resumed and most schools have begun to function again. Public and private services are up and running. The Haitian National Police has started training new officers and the courts are working. We can report that there has been a return to normality, to a certain degree.

However, as has already been said, a great deal remains to be done. More than 1 million people are still living in tents that are no longer strong enough to withstand the onslaught of tropical winds and rains. The hurricane season is already upon us and we can no longer afford to hesitate or make mistakes.

In addition, there are the devastating effects of the cholera epidemic, which in less than five months has officially claimed more than 3,500 lives and led to almost 90,000 hospitalizations. Fortunately, the response has been appropriate and we can hope that in the near future the health agencies will, with the help of the population, have this scourge under control. We hope that the panel of five experts established by the Secretary-General to investigate the origin of this problem will make its conclusions known soon in order to end speculation.

Finally, my delegation would like to recall that, while the day of 12 January 2010 was devastating for Haiti, it also provided a unique opportunity for a new vision of what a modern country should look like: a State focused on development, democracy and respect for human rights that is able to provide basic services to the population, which it must serve and protect. To achieve that goal, we are counting firmly on the continued full, frank and respectful cooperation of the international community. Patience, mutual understanding and continued dialogue are the principles by which we must all be guided.

The President: I thank the representative of Haiti for his statement.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretaries-General Le Roy and Amos for their very useful briefings. I also thank our Haitian colleague for his update.

We are meeting today a little more than a year after Haiti was struck by a truly devastating earthquake — a blow that lasted just 47 seconds but killed more than 220,000 human beings and left countless more wounded and desperate. The human and economic cost, as we all know, has been staggering, the worst of any natural disaster ever recorded in the western hemisphere.

In this Chamber, let me also recall the terrible toll that the quake took on the Organization, claiming the lives of 102 United Nations agency staff and peacekeepers, who had been working together with the Haitian people to bring about a brighter future.

A year later, Haiti's road to recovery is still long and difficult, but we must walk it together. We must rededicate ourselves to an enduring partnership with the Haitian people to help a suffering land rebuild and renew itself, strengthening Haiti's institutions and increasing its capacity so it can bind up the wounds of the past and build a better, more secure and more prosperous future for its people.

I would like to touch on four main topics today: elections, security, the humanitarian situation and reconstruction. First, with regard to elections, the United States welcomes the report of the Organization of American States (OAS) verification mission. Its findings offer a way forward towards improving credibility and public confidence in the presidential electoral process in Haiti. We urge the Provisional Electoral Council to implement the OAS report's recommendations. Sustained support from the international community, including the United States, requires a credible process that represents the will of the Haitian people, as expressed by their votes.

The United States strongly supports the Secretary-General's statement of 8 December, which expressed the United Nations commitment to free and fair elections that reflect the will of the Haitian people. We urge the Haitian authorities to outline a very clear way forward that will lead promptly to the inauguration of a legitimate and democratically elected Government. This must include issuing a timely and public electoral calendar. It must include announcing first-round results and conducting second-round elections in a manner consistent with the recommendations and findings of the OAS technical review. And it must include enacting measures that will increase public confidence in future electoral processes.

Let me also say a few words about the return this week of former President Jean-Claude Duvalier. Given the continuing turmoil surrounding the November 2010 election, the United States is concerned about the unpredictable impact that Duvalier's return may have on Haiti's political situation. My Government is clear about Duvalier's notorious record of human rights abuses and corruption. The situation on the ground is obviously fluid, but the Government of Haiti seems to be taking initial steps to hold Duvalier accountable for his actions during his time ruling Haiti.

Secondly, let me turn to security. My Government again thanks the dedicated men and women of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for their invaluable work in helping the Haitian National Police uphold the rule of law and in promoting overall security and stability in Haiti.

We ask that MINUSTAH continue to work to provide a secure environment throughout this period of uncertainty, even as it supports a credible elections process. Haiti cannot have hope if it does not have security. Without security, Haiti will be hamstrung in its attempts to tackle many of its most critical challenges, including rebuilding areas devastated by the earthquake and saving lives at risk in the cholera outbreak. During these challenging and uncertain days, we call on all actors to proceed in a calm and peaceful manner and to understand that violence and unrest can only thwart the will of the Haitian people, not express it.

Thirdly, let me say a few words about the humanitarian situation. A credible, peaceful and timely transfer of power is essential to Haiti's response to the cholera crisis. Unfortunately, cholera will be present in Haiti for years to come. Working with Haitian partners, the international community must continue to address short-term needs while working to lessen the disease's long-term impact. The United States welcomes the coordination and leadership role played throughout the crisis by Haiti's Ministry of Public Health and Population. The United States will continue to work with the Ministry and with the United Nations, non-governmental organization partners and other donors in the multilateral relief effort to help fill programmatic and funding gaps in the Government of Haiti's anti-cholera strategy. We encourage other donors and partners to do the same.

We continue to see encouraging signs that Haitians are heeding the Ministry of Public Health and Population's messages about chlorinating water and other hygiene procedures. But these gains in hygiene, as we have just heard, could easily vanish without sustained efforts. Through the United States Agency for International Development and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we support these efforts to get the word out to all Haitians.

Finally, let me turn to reconstruction and recovery. Lasting security in Haiti will not be achieved by police and troops alone. It will also take jobs and economic opportunity. The prospects for rebuilding Haiti depend upon maintaining a secure environment and creating jobs for Haitians. Many of the countries represented here today pledged assistance to Haiti during the March 2010 donors' conference. We must all remain committed to Haiti's recovery, deliver on those pledges and work in a coordinated and strategic fashion through the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission.

Haiti's supporters have shown unprecedented bilateral and multilateral cooperation, yet we must all deepen our commitment to progress and sustainable development in Haiti, led by its people. The United States has so far spent $332 million of our $1.15 billion recovery pledge over two years. These disbursements of our pledged funds come in addition to the more than $1 billion the United States has already provided in post-earthquake humanitarian funds, the more than $400 million we have reprogrammed to help support the recovery, and the more than $40 million we have spent on the cholera response. The collective commitment that we have made to Haiti's recovery must be sustained. For our part, United States spending against our pledge will continue to ramp up, not scale back.

Despite these enormous challenges, progress has been made since the earthquake struck. The recovery effort will take years. It will take partnership. It will take commitment. But Haiti's Government and its strong and resilient people had been making impressive progress towards greater stability and greater prosperity before calamity struck. We are determined to work together with them and with the international community over the long term to restore hope in the years to come.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I thank Under-Secretaries-General Alan Le Roy and Valerie Amos for their comprehensive briefings today.

One year after the earthquake and its devastating toll, compounded by the tragic loss of lives to the cholera epidemic, the situation in Haiti continues to be extremely difficult. We are closely following the latest developments in Haiti, in particular those related to the political process and the humanitarian situation.

The current political crisis demands a solution that is both legally sound and politically viable, the ultimate goal being the consolidation of democracy, stability and institutions in Haiti. To this end, it is crucial that the electoral process be allowed to run its course in a transparent and effective manner, with full respect for the pertinent legislation.

Equally important, it is up to Haiti itself and its leaders to ensure that the will of the people expressed in the polls is fully respected. It is also incumbent on them to help maintain calm, including by refraining from all acts of provocation or violence, regardless of political developments. It is the collective responsibility of all Haitian political actors to preserve the stability achieved in recent years.

The international community has supported Haiti in all these areas and, Brazil believes, is ready to continue to do so. In this regard, we commend the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the Organization of American States (OAS) and bilateral and multilateral partners for their invaluable contribution, especially at the current stage of the electoral process. The OAS has been particularly active in its efforts to assist the Haitians throughout the electoral process and, at this moment, with the verification stage. We are confident that the report prepared by its verification mission, which has now been officially submitted to the Provisional Electoral Council, will prove useful in its deliberations regarding the future of the electoral process.

The role of MINUSTAH will also remain critical. We commend the Mission's support for the electoral process and its continued engagement with the authorities, particularly the Haitian National Police, to ensure a stable environment in the difficult circumstances that followed the announcement of the preliminary results of the first round. We are confident that the Mission will continue to play its part.

Electing a new President and installing a new Parliament are important, not only to democracy in Haiti, but also to the reconstruction of the country. Recovery is under way, and we commend partners, donors and the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission for their commitment to achieving concrete results sooner rather than later.

More is needed, however. Disbursements continue to be insufficient and adequate funding for critical activities, such as cash-for-work programmes, is lacking. Partners will have to step up their support if we are to achieve the Commission's strategic targets in key areas in 2011. Humanitarian assistance also remains a priority while efforts continue to effectively address the political crisis.

Regarding the cholera epidemic, Brazil has contributed $2 million to the Pan American Health Organization to enable the procurement of medical supplies and equipment. We have also shipped nearly 2.5 tons of medical and non-medical supplies and sent medical teams to help provide treatment to people affected by cholera and training to local staff. We welcome the Secretary-General's decision to set up an independent panel of experts to look into the cholera outbreak in Haiti. Transparency in all contexts is key to the ability of the United Nations to address security and humanitarian concerns.

We are pleased to note the significant decrease in the population living in camps. That is a positive fact, but one that renders cooperation with Haitian authorities even more urgent in order to overcome existing obstacles to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons. It is crucial that the needs of the displaced and the returnees with regard to food, water, sanitation, housing, protection and health be met.

In all these areas — elections, recovery, security and humanitarian assistance — the importance of national ownership can hardly be overemphasized. Haiti's future prosperity and peace depend on the strengthening of the national State and national institutions. In all our collective and individual efforts, this imperative must guide our action.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Alain Le Roy, Valerie Amos and the chargé d'affaires of Haiti for their statements.

Since the earthquake in January 2010, Haiti has been shaken by other trials — Hurricane Tomas and the cholera epidemic. This series of disasters explains why there is still a need for urgent humanitarian aid. We are therefore keenly aware of the importance of coordination, especially given the exceptionally high number of agencies and non-governmental organizations at work in Haiti.

Against this backdrop, the role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is crucial to ensuring aid effectiveness. However, unless Haiti has strong and stable institutions, all these efforts will be in vain. By agreement with the Haitian Government, the Organization of American States sent a mission to evaluate the results of the first round. It exposed numerous acts of fraud and, as expected, has produced a series of recommendations.

France calls on the Haitian authorities to stand by their commitments to the international community and to take action on the recommendations. The country cannot be allowed to remain mired in paralysis or to sink back into violence. The will of the people must be respected, and new authorities must quickly take control of the country's future, with the support of the international community. In this difficult situation, I would like to commend the unwavering commitment of the staff of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, starting with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Edmond Mulet.

France continues to lend its support, both through the United Nations and bilaterally. Thanks to French support, the main hospital in Port-au-Prince has been able to keep its doors open. It will be rebuilt through a French-American partnership with the Haitian Ministry of Health and Population. We have expanded our technical cooperation in various areas, particularly education, governance and policing. Looking to the future, our educational institutions have been training almost 500 Haitian students as future magistrates or officials. We have allocated financial aid amounting to €326 million for 2010-2011.

France will maintain its commitment to the people and Government of Haiti, in coordination with the United Nations. We hope that, for their part, the Haitian authorities will take the decisions necessary to offer their country and their people a better future.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): Like other speakers, I would like first to renew our condolences to the people and Government of Haiti and to the United Nations for the losses they suffered during the devastating earthquake 12 months ago. Many thanks, too, are due to Under-Secretaries-General Le Roy and Amos and to the representative of Haiti for their briefings today.

Our continued gratitude also goes to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mulet, and the personnel of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for their dedicated work there. Events of recent weeks have shown again their crucial role in maintaining a secure environment. The United Kingdom continues to give its full support to MINUSTAH and looks forward to its continuing efforts to help build the capacity of the Haitian authorities and people. It is important for Haiti's long-term security that the people themselves, not United Nations peacekeepers, take the lead in reconstruction efforts, with the support of the international community.

The people of Haiti, along with the international community working in their support, have faced many challenges over the past 12 months, as previous speakers have said: the impact of Hurricane Tomas; the ongoing cholera epidemic, which has affected almost 200,000 Haitians; concerns about secure shelter for those displaced by the earthquake; and a safe environment for those living in camps.

Some progress has been made. It is good that the number of Haitians living in camps has halved. Effective public education campaigns have contributed to a decline in the cholera fatality rate. The Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Haiti has reported that 64 per cent of funds pledged last March have been disbursed. However, the challenges remain immense, and the international community must remain committed to supporting Haiti. The United Kingdom has played its part in the humanitarian effort, with more than a million people benefiting from British help. We have targeted our aid to providing people with food, shelter, clean water and medical care, and we have now supplied medical staff to run cholera treatment centres.

Turning to recent events, we welcome the Haitian Government's invitation to the Organization of American States (OAS) to conduct an inquiry into the first round of the presidential elections. We now look to the Haitian authorities to act on the recommendations of the OAS report in order to allow

the process to move forward with credibility. We urge all presidential candidates to share the collective responsibility for maintaining a peaceful environment in order to ensure conditions conducive to holding the second round. It is vital that the new Haitian Government be seen to have been elected democratically and legitimately in order to allow it to lead the reconstruction process in the name of its people. Free, fair and transparent elections are the only way to achieve this.

The way forward for Haiti will not be easy, but it will be tackled with the support of the international community, MINUSTAH, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the other United Nations agencies. We hope that Haiti's progress towards a stable environment will not be lost, and we will continue to give our full support to its people.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Alain Le Roy and Ms. Valerie Amos for their briefings on recent developments in Haiti. I also welcome the representative of Haiti.

Colombia and Haiti share not only maritime borders and a historic past, but also a deep concern for the welfare of Haiti's people. Our country has expressed and reiterated, on many occasions and at the highest level, its desire to be involved in and support humanitarian efforts and reconstruction in Haiti. On 24 September in the General Assembly, President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón of Colombia called on the Council to "consider transforming the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti into a true development operation" (*A/65/PV.15, p. 5*) for the nation.

Today, we reaffirm that conviction, because it is clear that Haiti is in need of sound institutions, a stronger democracy and infrastructure for development. To achieve that, it needs foreign investment to generate employment and create wealth. All of this must be undertaken with respect for the principles of non-interference in Haiti's internal affairs, its independence, national sovereignty, cultural identity and diversity in order to put it on the road to development and reconstruction.

Colombia, like many countries, has joined in providing humanitarian aid to Haiti, but we feel no need to go into details in that respect. We are certain, however, that all the cooperation given so far is not enough to meet the needs of a people to whom the world owes a historical debt that must be repaid. In the anguish, pain and sadness we see on Haitians' faces, we see not only hope but also the opportunity to become better human beings, to ennoble the meaning of the word "life" and, above all, to join with them in solidarity from the bottom of our hearts, with no expectation of reward other than answering the call of our consciences.

We know that with its mandate for maintaining security, facilitating the creation of a stable Government, disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating all armed groups, and helping to reform the police and justice systems, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) still has major challenges ahead. It is time to focus the scope of the tasks that the Security Council has assigned it, so that, together with the Organization of American States and other regional organizations, we can achieve the rapid stabilization and reconstruction in Haiti.

We share Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's concerns about Haiti, in particular on the need to complete the election process successfully. In our view, the completion of the second round of elections is a critical element of Haiti's recovery, reconstruction and development. We must focus all our efforts on this end and support the Haitian Government, its authorities and the Organization of American States.

MINUSTAH's mandates include fostering the principles of democratic governance and institutional development. To that end, the consolidation of the electoral system, the strengthening of justice and the establishment of a legislature that responds to the needs of its people are critical priorities. Colombia supports the call on MINUSTAH to continue supporting projects that contribute to a climate of trust. International financial institutions and donors worldwide have a central role in the future of Haiti. Development and welfare must go hand in hand with social awareness on the part of those institutions, so that the dividends are accompanied by progress, security and peace.

Finally, we are fully convinced that all action for Haiti's recovery and strengthening of Haiti, through sectoral and coordinated planning that allows the participation of all Haitian political and social actors in the process of national reconstruction, is an indispensable prerequisite. Likewise, we call on the countries and organizations that made offers of cooperation to ensure the prompt realization of such assistance so that efforts under way are not in vain.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my thanks to Mr. Alain Le Roy and Ms. Valerie Amos for their briefings on the recent political and humanitarian developments in Haiti. On this first anniversary of the earthquake, we would like to reiterate our condolences to the Government and people of Haiti and to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

My delegation views with great concern the repercussions that took place following the announcement of the results of the presidential elections on 7 December 2010. We would like to stress that any observations or objections with regard to the election results must be addressed by the constitutional institutions and in accordance with due process, without any recourse to violence. We would also like to appeal to political parties to take into account the contents of the report prepared by the mission of the Organization of American States.

In that context, we would like to stress the need to conduct the second round of the presidential elections in full respect for the standards of fairness and transparency and in such a way as to promote democracy and make it possible to continue the constitutional reforms and reconstruction efforts. We also call on all political groups to remain calm at this critical juncture in Haiti's history. We reiterate that the elections must reflect the true will of the people of Haiti.

We would also like to express our concern about the continuing spread of the cholera epidemic. We call on the international community to provide immediate assistance to control the epidemic. As the Secretary-General said, "Without a massive and immediate international response, we will not be able to overcome this crisis. The lives of hundreds of thousands of people are at risk." In that regard, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's establishment of a panel of experts to determine the cause of the epidemic.

Finally, we would like to stress that every possible effort must be made to promote the work of Haiti's judicial institutions in order to prevent impunity and ensure the proper functioning of the courts, prisons and police, in full respect for human rights laws and rules. We would also like to emphasize the need to respect the will of the people of Haiti in determining its future and building its national institutions.

Finally, we call on donors to fulfil the pledges made at the donor conference without delay, since development and reconstruction pave the way for security and stability.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): Like others, I too wish to thank Under-Secretaries-General Alain Le Roy and Valerie Amos for their reports and the very relevant information that they provided the Council today. I also wish to thank our colleague from Haiti for his statement.

One year after the earthquake, our thoughts of course go to the hundreds of thousands of Haitians who perished and to the civilian and military men and women of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) who lost their lives. We should also be grateful to the United Nations staff on the ground who, disregarding their own safety, worked to save lives in the following hours and days.

It is obvious that humanitarian relief will continue to be the main priority as long as the basic needs of the Haitian population — be it access to water, food, shelter, sanitation or health care — are not ensured. Hurricane Tomas and cholera have compounded the situation. Millions still depend on humanitarian aid on a daily basis, even if, encouragingly, some progress has been made, such as the decrease in the number of internally displaced persons, the reduction of the mortality rate and the stabilization of the cholera outbreak. However, much more needs to be done, and the international community can do more, namely, at the structural level.

The transparency and credibility of the electoral process that will lead to the installation of a democratic Administration are paramount. The paralysis that we have seen during the past two months needs to be quickly overcome. We commend the work carried out by the Organization of the American States (OAS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and its expert mission on the presidential election of last November. We hope that their findings will help to restore credibility and the confidence of the Haitian people in their political system.

In that sense, a free, fair and transparent second round of the presidential election is essential. To pursue that objective, effective international observation of those elections is crucial, minimizing the potential for irregularities and providing

meaningful support for that process. We thank the OAS and CARICOM for their valuable cooperation in the next decisive phase of that process. MINUSTAH can also play an important role, not only by providing logistical support and ensuring safety throughout the process, but also by promoting political dialogue.

The earthquake brought Haiti's woes to us under a sharper light. Social and economic conditions in Haiti were already very difficult prior to it. Respect for human rights, the rule of law and the democratic process were not entrenched. What we are currently addressing is not only the turmoil created by the cataclysm, but also the structural deficiencies and imbalances that have existed for many years. That aspect must be taken into account in designing our response to political and social developments in the country.

The hard road to recovery and sustainable development requires stability, democratically legitimized authorities and political leadership. We must recognize that those conditions have never been fully met. We are concerned about new elements that may further increase the present instability in the country, such as the return of Mr. Duvalier, even if he is brought to justice.

Ensuring security in all its dimensions is an essential requirement for the full recovery of Haiti. It must be felt in urban and rural communities all over the country. Furthermore, it is a prerequisite for efficient distribution of aid. MINUSTAH's efforts in that area are highly laudable, and we are well aware of the immense challenges that it faces on a daily basis.

Regarding relief and recovery, Portugal stresses the need to reinforce coordination among MINUSTAH, United Nations agencies and programmes, national and international non-governmental organizations and the various donors. The ability to absorb the necessary resources for reconstruction is a vital issue for Haiti and for international donors. Our efforts in capacity-building should aim at solving the present situation.

Finally, Portugal joins others in expressing concern over the fragile and unstable situation in Haiti and the continued plight of the population. While giving our full support to MINUSTAH in fulfilling its mandate, we also stress the importance of calling upon the parties to abide by democratic rules, the Constitution and the laws of Haiti and to allow MINUSTAH and humanitarian workers full and unhindered access to all people in need.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Under-Secretaries-General Le Roy and Amos for their informative briefings on developments in Haiti. We also listened with interest to the statement by Mr. Cazeau, Haiti's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

The situation in Haiti remains difficult. The devastating earthquake was followed by an outbreak of cholera and the political crisis that erupted following the holding of the presidential and parliamentary elections. The international community is providing humanitarian assistance of unprecedented scale and solidarity to the community of Port-au-Prince.

The Russian Federation has disbursed $8 million for the reconstruction of Haiti through the intermediary of various international organizations, first and foremost the United Nations system. At the same time, not all donor pledges have actually reached Haiti. We share the Secretary-General's concern regarding the fact that Haiti's reconstruction is progressing very slowly. Over 1 million Haitians are still housed in tent camps.

The main responsibility for the reconstruction of Haiti is borne by the people of that country. The Haitian Government must play a leading role in coordinating humanitarian and reconstruction activity. To resolve the problems facing Haiti, Port-au-Prince must be helped above all in strengthening the structures of State authority, thus enabling Haitians to resolve the issues of reconstruction and national development themselves.

The parliamentary and presidential elections held on 28 November 2010 were a serious challenge to Haiti. This new elections-related area of tension must be prevented from complicating international reconstruction efforts in the country. We urge all political forces in Haiti to demonstrate calm and restraint and to resolve contentious issues exclusively through legal mechanisms.

We welcome the efforts of the Organization of American States and the United Nations to resolve the situation. We believe that the Haitian Government, which bears the primary responsibility for the situation in the country, will take all necessary steps to successfully complete the elections process in line with

its domestic legislation and democratic standards, with the assistance of the international community, including regional organizations.

We express our support for the activities of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We are grateful to the Mission leader and staff for their work in trying conditions.

We welcome the comprehensive support being provided to Haiti by regional States. We note the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy for Haiti, Bill Clinton, aimed at mobilizing donor support for the country. Given the scale of the problems afflicting Haiti, the international community must continue its comprehensive support to the Government of that country in order to fully restore Haiti's national potential.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me in turn to thank Under-Secretaries-General Mr. Le Roy and Ms. Amos, as well as the representative of Haiti, for their briefings.

My delegation remains concerned by the fact that, two and a half months after the announcement of the results of the first round of the presidential election, the second round has not yet taken place. The Government of Haiti, despite its efforts, is not yet in a position to conclude the review of disputed issues by the relevant Haitian entities. We pay tribute to the Organization of American States (OAS) for its assessment report on the electoral process, and hope that the Provisional Electoral Council, in line with the agreement reached between the Government and the OAS, will professionally, transparently and impartially consider the recommendations contained in the report and bring the electoral process to its conclusion.

We urge the political class in Haiti, for its part, to accept in good faith the results of that review. We hope for a successful conclusion to the electoral process in order to ensure that Haiti has a Government that will be in a position to tackle — with the support of the international community, of course — the various hardships afflicting the country, including the lack of security.

With respect to the lack of security in particular, we are alarmed by the reports of recent acts of sexual violence. We are, however, encouraged by the efforts of the Haitian Government to rebuild the judiciary and train security forces, with the assistance of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

The recovery and reconstruction of Haiti require national mobilization, which has largely taken place. It also requires coordinated efforts and a rational use of the assistance provided. We are convinced that this will all take place and that the assistance promised by the various donors will indeed be disbursed. We also welcome the progress achieved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance since the terrible earthquake of January 2010 and the outbreak of the cholera epidemic.

In conclusion, Gabon will continue to support the efforts of MINUSTAH in Haiti to rebuild and reconstruct the country.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): One year after the devastating earthquake in Haiti, our thoughts are with the victims and their families. We recall the extraordinary sacrifice made by the personnel of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos and Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy and their teams, as well as the countries contributing to MINUSTAH for their great commitment to tackling the multitude of challenges we are facing in Haiti. We are grateful for today's comprehensive briefings and analysis of the situation in Haiti, which continues to be complex and challenging. I also thank Mr. Cazeau for his remarks.

Haiti has suffered beyond imagination. Please allow me to share some of our views, mainly on two aspects: the humanitarian tragedy and the international efforts to assist the people of Haiti; and ways to overcome the current political crisis.

First, we are grateful to all the aid workers from the United Nations and hundreds of non-governmental organizations in Haiti for their tireless efforts in very difficult circumstances. They did not falter when faced with the magnitude of the catastrophe. We acknowledge the important role and contribution of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and appreciate the efforts undertaken to date. OCHA is working in a very complex and difficult environment, with hundreds of non-governmental organizations working in the field. We would like to encourage OCHA to continue its efforts with a view to

further improving coordination among all the stakeholders involved.

We also recall that millions of private donors demonstrated their solidarity with the hard-hit people of Haiti in a truly unprecedented manner. These donors expect our best efforts to ensure that their aid reaches the people in need.

In 2011, the focus of international assistance will continue to shift from humanitarian towards reconstruction efforts. We commend the constructive work of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission. Germany, like others, has contributed substantially from the outset to the relief and reconstruction efforts conducted by the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations.

Let me mention a point of concern to us — the protection of people from sexual violence, in particular girls and women living in camps. We welcome ongoing efforts to address this situation.

We should not forget the central role of the people of Haiti in rebuilding their country. The strength, the determination and the spirit of millions of Haitians command our respect.

Let me turn to the second key aspect. If the ongoing recovery, reconstruction and development are to succeed, political stability is indispensable. The current political crisis surrounding the first round of the presidential elections is a cause of serious concern to us. The Council has consistently underlined the immense importance of free and fair elections in Haiti to laying the political foundations on which to rebuild the country. We welcome the continued efforts of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mulet and Under-Secretary-General Le Roy to engage the political leadership in Haiti in a dialogue aimed at enhancing political stability and national unity.

The decision of the Government of Haiti to call upon the Organization of American States (OAS) to send an expert verification mission for the first round of the presidential elections was a good one. We fully support the recommendations of the OAS expert verification mission contained in its report. We commend the Provisional Electoral Council for having provided access to information for the OAS mission. We now urge the Provisional Electoral Council to take the logical second step and base its decisions on the OAS recommendations regarding the second round of the presidential elections. Credible elections are crucial for political stability and ongoing reconstruction efforts in Haiti. Germany joins the call on all political leaders in Haiti to assume their responsibilities and work together in order to bring the electoral process to a successful conclusion.

In conclusion, Germany remains committed to supporting Haiti's critical needs. Together, we can make 2011 a better year for Haiti.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to Under-Secretaries-General Le Roy and Amos for their informative briefings to the Security Council on the situation in Haiti. We also thank our Haitian colleague for his briefing.

Last week we in the United Nations family joined with the people of Haiti when we commemorated the one year anniversary of the devastating earthquake that claimed the lives of nearly a quarter of a million people and displaced over 1 million more. It was also a day that saw the biggest single-day loss of life among the men and women who serve the Organization through the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. South Africa again expresses its deepest condolences and sympathy to all who were affected by that devastating event. Human suffering was further exacerbated in the aftermath of the earthquake by the effects of hurricane Tomas and the outbreak of the deadly cholera epidemic, further compounding the humanitarian challenges in Haiti.

Our delegation remains concerned about the political and humanitarian situation in Haiti. In that regard, we reiterate our commitment to the ongoing recovery and reconstruction efforts in the country. We concur with the assessment that Haiti's recovery will require a multi-year effort, and therefore that the acceleration of recovery efforts for Haiti must be an absolute priority for 2011.

We are concerned about the slow pace of recovery. We call on the international community to redouble its efforts in supporting the Government of Haiti in leading the recovery. In that regard, we have noted the call in resolution 1944 (2010), adopted by the Council in October, for the international community to coordinate its efforts with the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission. It is also essential that the Government lead all recovery efforts and that those efforts be closely coordinated so as to ensure that they are

efficient and transparent and meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

The cholera epidemic undermines the recovery efforts further. We have taken note of the improved manner in which the epidemic has been addressed and of the decline in the mortality rate. But more needs to be done. We are especially concerned about the impact of the epidemic on the most vulnerable. We welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of a panel of experts on the cholera outbreak.

South Africa, individually and as a partner in the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) trilateral mechanism, will continue to contribute to the recovery efforts and to the sustainable development of the country. We have already provided humanitarian aid through the United Nations humanitarian system, facilitated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We are committed to allocating more support in the near future. We call on all Member States that made pledges during the Haiti pledging conference to fulfil their commitments.

We have noted with serious concern the stalemate in Haiti over the elections held on 28 November 2010. The current impasse will only further worsen the already fragile political, socio-economic and Government systems in Haiti. Credible elections are essential for stability in Haiti, which in turn will contribute to the recovery process and the achievement of development. We are also concerned about the recurrent violence. We call on all parties to be cautious in their actions, so as to avoid plunging the country into further turmoil.

We have taken note of the report of the expert verification mission of the Organization of American States, including its conclusions and recommendations. We have also taken note of the communiqué issued by the Provisional Electoral Council of Haiti on 19 January 2011 on the report. We note as well that the appeals process is still under way. It is crucial that the current situation be resolved within the established legal process and in a manner that will accurately reflect the will of the Haitian people.

Members of the international community have a responsibility to stand by the people of Haiti, whether bilaterally or through the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. All efforts should provide the Government and the people of Haiti with the requisite support. In that regard, we express our support and appreciation to the Organization of American States and the Caribbean Community for their commitment to Haiti. We also commend all the bilateral efforts of many countries in addressing the multiple needs of the country.

Moreover, the Security Council's continued engagement and focus on Haiti is very important at this critical stage. It is essential that the Council continue to support the electoral process in Haiti by demanding that all the parties — individual candidates as well as the population of Haiti — refrain from violence and address the current situation through the legal processes provided for by the Constitution and the electoral law.

In addressing all these pressing needs my delegation stands ready to work with partners in the Council to ensure that we remain seized on the matter and serve the interests of the Haitians.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): I join other colleagues in thanking Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos for their comprehensive and useful briefings on the situation in Haiti. I would also like to thank the representative of Haiti for sharing his perspective on the state of play there.

It has been a very difficult year for the people of Haiti. Just as stability was beginning to be witnessed in the country and the indicators of economic development were showing an upward trend, the country was struck by a massive earthquake on 12 January 2010. The disaster took the lives of nearly 300,000 persons and injured an equal number. An earthquake of such devastation — the worst in the region in more than 200 years — demanded relief operations of a huge magnitude. The international community rose to the occasion and undertook the challenge to help the people of Haiti. Our work continues, and should continue as long as the Haitian people require our assistance in their efforts at reconstruction.

Last week, the Council issued a press statement on the anniversary of the earthquake in Haiti. We wish to convey our sincere sympathies to the people and Government of Haiti and to the families of the United Nations personnel who lost their lives. We assure them of our continued support.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, India made a cash contribution of $5 million to the Government of Haiti towards relief measures, as a token of our solidarity with the people of Haiti. I would also like to recall that the Central Emergency Response Fund was put to good use in the earliest stages of recovery work in Haiti. India attaches importance to that facility, to which we have made significant contributions since its inception and to which we have contributed $500,000 each year over the three-year period since 2009. Furthermore, recognizing the need to provide basic amenities — shelter, drinking water and sanitation — to the Haitian people, we have joined Brazil and South Africa in expanding the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Trust Fund's waste management project in Haiti, in both its area of coverage and its scope in handling different types of waste. IBSA is spending over $2 million in that effort and for the reconstruction of a community health centre in Haiti.

As we progress towards reconstruction and rehabilitation in Haiti, we think there is an urgent need for better coordination among aid agencies, donors and the Government of Haiti. This would not only avoid duplication but also direct aid to sectors considered most necessary by Haiti. The various United Nations agencies have to work hard on improving Haiti's technical capacity to fully and properly utilize assistance. For our part, India has pledged to reconstruct one of the Government ministries, to be identified by the Government of Haiti. In that context, I must share with the Council that, in spite of several efforts that I personally made, it is perhaps the lack of coordination that is making it very difficult for us even to identify where our offer could be best utilized.

We highly commend and support the role played by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in humanitarian and recovery efforts in the aid of the local authorities. We are proud of their sterling efforts, both on the civilian and police sides, in the immediate aftermath of the disastrous earthquake, in spite of the tremendous losses that the Mission itself faced. I also recall the contributions made by the Indian police officers deployed with MINUSTAH, which presently number 470 in three contingents, two of which were deployed by India after the earthquake at the request of the United Nations. MINUSTAH peacekeepers continue to provide full support to the local authorities. We therefore urge all stakeholders that any action that impedes the work of MINUSTAH peacekeepers should be avoided.

Even as Haiti battled to overcome the disaster caused by the earthquake, it was struck by an outbreak of cholera, which further aggravated the already grim situation. In the midst of all that, the country has become embroiled in a political crisis following the presidential elections. As far as the cholera epidemic is concerned, we hope that the recent appointment by the Secretary-General of an independent panel of experts to determine the source of the epidemic will submit its report based on scientific studies and that this will adequately address the allegations that have been made. I am sure that Doctor Balakrish Nair, Director of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases in Kolkata, who is a member of the panel, will make a valuable contribution to the panel's work.

We think that concerted reconstruction and rehabilitation work demands stable political and administrative conditions. We therefore call upon all political actors in Haiti to exercise restraint and avoid actions that cause violence and distract focus from the urgently needed reconstruction and rehabilitation work. The focus of the United Nations should of course remain on humanitarian and infrastructure work. It should not get too deeply involved in the domestic political process, which is better handled by regional organizations in cooperation with the local political establishment.

Mr. Lolo (Nigeria): Let me join others who have spoken before me in thanking Mr. Alain Le Roy and Ms. Valerie Amos for their very useful briefings.

We are pleased that our meeting today to mark the first anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010 has not ignored the overall challenges that still exist in the country, which have been made worse by the outbreak of the cholera epidemic. The earthquake and the epidemic have resulted in the deaths of more than 203,000 people, including United Nations personnel, and has rolled back many years of development gains achieved in the areas of infrastructure, health, shelter and education in Haiti, the poorest and least developed country in the western hemisphere, as Ms. Amos reminded us this morning.

I would like to convey Nigeria's gratitude to all those who responded positively and stood shoulder to shoulder with the Government and people of Haiti in

their darkest hour of need. The generosity of the international community in providing assistance for relief, recovery and reconstruction in the aftermath of the tragedy has no doubt made a tremendous difference in Haiti. Nigeria was among the many contributors that provided assistance in cash and in kind. Our assistance to Haiti in the past year exceeded $10 million, including cash and relief materials. I should note also that, under a bilateral agreement, Nigerian Technical Aid Corps volunteers had been providing assistance in Haiti in diverse fields for several years prior to the earthquake.

The role of the United Nations — in particular that of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) — in leading the international efforts in Haiti is most commendable. Nigeria is pleased that its police contingent is part of MINUSTAH, which has continued to carry out its mandate with distinction under very trying circumstances. May I therefore salute the courage, dedication and sacrifice of the gallant men and women of MINUSTAH, led by Mr. Edmond Mulet, as well as of all humanitarian workers in Haiti.

Much remains to be done to restore Haiti to its pre-earthquake state. As we have been reminded, 800,000 Haitians still live in makeshift camps. Other challenges include malnutrition, poor sanitation and weak health systems and basic services. In the face of those challenges, the international community must not take its focus from Haiti. We must continue in our bilateral and multilateral efforts to assist Haiti to grow better and faster from the devastating effects of the earthquake and the cholera epidemic. It is our hope that donors will not only fulfil outstanding pledges but also respond favourably to OCHA's 2011 consolidated appeal for $906 million to address the humanitarian needs in Haiti. We urge the United Nations to continue to enhance its coordination efforts with other humanitarian actors.

The political uncertainty in Haiti is a matter of serious concern. We recognize the important role and contribution that the Organization of American States (OAS) can make in helping to resolve the ongoing electoral crisis in Haiti. We encourage the Provisional Electoral Commission to take into account the report submitted by the OAS verification mission in determining the candidates for the run-off election. In that connection, we call on the Provisional Electoral Council and all of Haiti's political leaders to fully respect the will of the people and refrain from any action that will derail or undermine Haiti's march towards democracy and legitimate governance. There is an urgent need for a date and candidates to be announced for the run-off elections. The longer it takes to resolve the political crisis, the longer Haiti will remain mired in its myriad problems.

Nigeria hopes that Haiti's leaders, past and present, will see the need to put the interests of their people above personal and partisan interests in order to move their country forward, with the international community providing continuous support and encouragement.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretaries-General Le Roy and Amos for the briefings they have given us. I also wish to thank the representative of Haiti for the statement he has made.

The earthquake of 12 January 2010 produced unprecedented devastation in Haiti. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) also suffered heavy losses. Eight Chinese peacekeeping police officers were killed. China would again like to extend its deep condolences to the families of the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. We hope that, with the support of the international community, the people of Haiti will come together and rebuild their homes at an early date.

The current situation in Haiti is serious and fragile. The process of consolidating security and achieving sustainable peace and stability faces many challenges. We believe that the United Nations and the international community should focus in the short term on providing support and assistance in the following three aspects.

First, they should promote an appropriate solution to Haiti's presidential election crisis. Holding free, fair and credible elections in Haiti will be of great significance to lasting peace and stability and post-disaster reconstruction in the country. We call on all sides in Haiti to focus on the peace and stability of the country and the well-being of the people; uphold unity, renounce violence, avoid provocations; resolve disputes through consultations within the framework of Haiti's Constitution and laws; and ensure that the elections truly reflect the will of the Haitian people.

We appreciate the active role played by the Organization of American States in this regard.

Secondly, support to Haiti's post-disaster reconstruction efforts should be stepped up. Rebuilding Haiti will take years of hard work, there will be many challenges, and the long-term support and assistance of the international community will be needed. We call on all relevant actors to provide the assistance they committed to Haiti as soon as possible.

United Nations agencies, international financial instructions and regional organizations should further enhance coordination, clarify the division of labour, improve aid effectiveness, and avoid duplication and the wasting of resources. We support the United Nations in playing a more effective coordinating role in the process of Haiti's post-disaster reconstruction.

Thirdly, we must help Haiti to deal with the cholera epidemic, which has brought further suffering to its people. The international community should continue to provide assistance to Haiti in preventing and controlling the cholera epidemic so as to prevent any further spread.

MINUSTAH has played an important role in maintaining security and stability in Haiti. We appreciate the contributions made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and MINUSTAH under difficult conditions. In the current situation, MINUSTAH should concentrate on helping Haiti maintain security and stability, promote the political process and support Haiti's capacity-building in the security and judicial sectors. We also hope that the United Nations will enhance its comprehensive evaluation of the situation in Haiti, improve its security, early warning and crisis management capacities, and effectively respond to various security threats and challenges.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I thank Under-Secretaries-General Ms. Valerie Amos and Mr. Alain Le Roy for their informative briefings. We welcome the participation of the Deputy Permanent Representative of Haiti.

Last year was one of the harshest in recent Haitian history. Nature showed no mercy to the country, as one disaster followed another. A devastating earthquake, hurricane and cholera outbreak took their toll and left deep scars on that proud nation. This meeting of the Security Council offers the opportunity to send the Haitian people a message of support and encouragement and to assure them that the United Nations and the international community will not let them down.

Now, let me address some issues related to the current situation in Haiti. We believe that the Haitian people, with the support of the international community, will be able to bring the electoral process to a successful end. Concluding the electoral process in a peaceful and credible manner is a critical component of Haiti's ongoing recovery and reconstruction efforts. The establishment of a legitimate Government is a basic precondition for long-term stability and development.

At this politically sensitive moment, it is vital that the population and all political actors show maximum restraint in order to avoid any deterioration of the security situation in the country. We call upon the Haitian authorities to ensure a calm and secure environment for the second round of presidential elections. It is imperative that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) extend its indispensable support to national authorities.

We welcome the assistance of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the voting verification process. This should be seen as a significant element in ensuring the credibility of the electoral process. The OAS recommendations should be taken into account by the electoral authorities and Haitian political parties.

The new Government in Haiti will not have an easy task before it. Along with reconstruction, the Government will have to address outstanding challenges in the areas of security, the rule of law and institutional reform. Special attention should be given to security sector reform. Enhancing the capacity of the Haitian National Police must be a priority. The international community and MINUSTAH must continue to assist national authorities in that regard.

Bosnia and Herzegovina attaches great importance to the social and economic conditions of internally displaced persons in Haiti. It is crucial that the ad hoc Presidential Commission on Resettlement closely monitor and coordinate activities related to the relocation and resettlement of internally displaced persons. All activities related to those delicate issues must be carried out with due sensitivity.

We welcome the roles of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission and the Haiti Reconstruction Fund and their pivotal role in long-term reconstruction. It is essential that donors continue to fulfil their commitments to Haiti and provide the resources necessary for reconstruction and development. International donors must closely coordinate their activities with the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission in order to make international assistance more efficient.

We commend former President of the United States William Clinton for his efforts as the United Nations Special Envoy for Haiti to enhance international support to Haiti and to improve cooperation with the Haitian authorities in facilitating and coordinating assistance.

During these painful times for Haiti, the United Nations and MINUSTAH have played a critical role. It is important that partnership between the Haitian people and the United Nations be further strengthened to maintain positive developments and meet the remaining challenges.

Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the efforts of MINUSTAH and its assistance to the national authorities in the protection of civilians, in particular internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. We underscore the importance for MINUSTAH to continue to work towards its full deployment as outlined in resolution 1944 (2010).

In conclusion, on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would like to commend the United Nations and MINUSTAH staff for their tireless efforts and the important work they are carrying out in Haiti.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Ms. Valerie Amos to make a further statement.

Ms. Amos: I want to take this opportunity to thank Member States for the contribution they have made to the overall aid effort in Haiti and for their focus on the importance of coordination. In that respect, we in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are strengthening our operation in Haiti and our focus on the importance of coordination among the United Nations, its agencies and national authorities, with particular stress on national ownership.

Member States have also focused on the importance of stable institutions and overall security to facilitate the aid effort and longer-term development. It is also important to continue paying attention to the protection of people from sexual violence. All of these remain important aspects not only of the humanitarian response but also of the ongoing development efforts.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.